

# Art and Colonialism: The Mosaics of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (1169) and the Problem of “Crusader” Art

LUCY-ANNE HUNT

Incorporating one of the most important shrines of the Holy Land, the Church of the Nativity has been a pilgrimage goal since its Constantinian foundation. But the twelfth century represents a special moment in the monument's history. Prominent among work undertaken in the church at this time was the program of mosaic redecoration, completed in 1169 through the collaboration of the Byzantine emperor, the king of Jerusalem, and the Latin Church. Recent cleaning of the mosaics has both made them more accessible for study and shown them to belong to an integral twelfth-century phase. Of the many questions raised by the mosaic program, just one is addressed here: its iconography in the light of the political and theological debates of the 1160s, and the implications of this for an understanding of the role of art within the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. I shall argue that the church's program played a specific role in crystallizing theological debate between the Orthodox, Latin, and eastern Christian churches at a time when politics was being played out within a theological and cultural arena. Inscriptions naming the mosaicists suggest an attribution to indigenous artist-theologians, an assumption that challenges the established discourse of “Crusader” art as essentially bipolar, western and Byzantine. Highlighting the contribution of the host culture, represented by the resident Christian communities, redresses the balance of interpretation in favor of the indigenous component.<sup>1</sup>

## I. INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF “CRUSADER” ART

“Crusader” art has been viewed from a predominantly western perspective, either as a French co-

lonial transplant or as a *mélange* of western and eastern traditions. According to this view, French, Italian, and German “patrons”—political leaders, ecclesiastics of the Latin Church and members of the military orders—imposed their tastes on artists of western or Byzantine origin to evolve a distinctive amalgam of western and eastern cultures. The terms “*maniera greca*,” “*lingua franca*,” “Levantine,” and “*maniera cypriote*” have so far sufficed in art historical writing in place of more rigorous interpretation.

How has this come about? Art historiography in this field has to be seen in the context of Crusader studies as a whole, which in the last forty years has been preoccupied with colonization as the essential factor. This preoccupation was very much born of scholarship of the 1950s: “Colonialism is the emotional issue of the decade,” wrote S. T. Possony in an essay entitled “Colonial Problems in Perspective,” published in 1958.<sup>2</sup> But that this was from a purely western viewpoint in its application to Crusader studies is well demonstrated by the statement of M. W. Baldwin that “When the goal had been achieved some warriors elected to remain in the east, and they and their successors faced the manifold tasks of a ‘colonial’ administration. Vastly inferior in numbers to the heterogeneous native population, they created in an eastern environment a civilization which was fundamentally western.”<sup>3</sup> More recently, J. Prawer sought to show that Crusader society as it settled not merely transplanted western institutions, but adapted these to

Berlin, during 1986–7 enabled me to undertake the groundwork for this article. I am also grateful to Prof. J. Folda and Prof. A. Weyl Carr for their comments on an earlier, more extensive, draft.

<sup>2</sup>In R. Strausz-Hupé and H. W. Hazard, eds., *The Idea of Colonialism* (London, 1958), 17.

<sup>3</sup>K. M. Setton, gen. ed., *A History of the Crusades*, I, *The First Hundred Years*, 2nd ed. (London, 1969), xxii.

<sup>1</sup>The tenure of an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship at the Byzantinisch-Neugriechisches Seminar, Freie Universität, West

exploit the eastern situation. In Prawer's analysis, Crusader society emerges as almost exclusively urban, legalistic, and pragmatic, leaving little impact behind it on the area it settled.<sup>4</sup> In seeking a *modus* of settlement, Crusaders had a series of choices to draw on: "First there was the important factor of local conditions; secondly, the possibility of local precedents which could help or inspire the new enterprisers; and thirdly, there was obviously their European background."<sup>5</sup> Art history was not among Prawer's concerns. And yet art historical thinking has run along similar lines. While rejecting the term "colonial" as such, H. Buchthal writing in 1957 described miniature painting as developing a local style from its hybrid nature. Local can be equated with Frankish here since the artists are assumed to be western in origin: "The masters of Jerusalem or Acre were either foreigners themselves, Frenchmen or Italians who had been specially recruited for work in Outremer, or Frankish natives who had perhaps served part of their apprenticeship at Constantinople, or some well-known scriptorium in the Latin West."<sup>6</sup> It is very largely on the basis of the relative strength of the western input that the cultural role of Acre as the successor to Jerusalem has been defined. J. Folda referred to the "strong colonial note struck by the Hospitaller Master and his style at the very end of the Acre School development. It reaffirms the fundamentally western artistic and intellectual nature of the city. Furthermore, we encounter once again the polarity in crusader art that characterizes twelfth-century painting, when the westerners were newcomers."<sup>7</sup> The identification of the contribution of artists of various backgrounds has been seen to amount to a hybrid *mélange* of distinctive features, which was revitalized periodically from the West.

The art historical concept of "Crusader" art is grounded, then, in a preoccupation with colonization from a western point of view. It is envisaged as a composite, the output of western artists of different nationalities confronting Byzantine art. In a series of pioneering articles on the icons of St. Catherine's monastery, Mount Sinai, K. Weitzmann proposed the activity of French, Venetian, and Southern Italian artists in the Holy Land, bringing

western styles and techniques to the imitation of Byzantine works of art.<sup>8</sup> Not least among the difficulties this raises, however, is the stylistic one of the scale of western-ness or Byzantine-ness of a work of art when such terms are neither appropriate as absolutes nor easily applicable to an eastern Mediterranean situation.<sup>9</sup>

The two-way nature of west-east cultural exchange in the Crusader period is now a subject of debate, with acknowledgment of ways in which eastern affected western as well as vice versa.<sup>10</sup> The last decade has also seen the proliferation of research into artistic production throughout the eastern Mediterranean world, including the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem itself.<sup>11</sup> With this expanded body of material, the need for critical analysis is becoming ever more crucial. It is apparent that common features cannot simply be put down to either western or Byzantine origins. A different, cross-cultural approach is needed to draw out the local, indigenous side of the colonial relationship.

First, some observations on the type of appropriate colonial model to be applied are called for. A pre-capitalist colonial situation cannot be caricatured as a transplantation of feudalism, any more than one following the emergence of capital-

<sup>8</sup>K. Weitzmann, "Thirteenth-Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai," *ArtB* 14.3, repr. in idem, *Studies in the Arts at Sinai: Essays by Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton, 1982), no. XI, 291–315; idem, "Icon Painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *DOP* 20 (1966), repr. in *Studies*, no. XII, 325–57; idem, "Crusader Icons and the 'Maniera greca,'" in H. Belting, ed., *Il Medio Oriente e l'Occidente nell'arte del XIII secolo*, Atti del XXIV Congresso C.I.H.A., Bologna 1979 (Bologna, 1982), 71–77; idem, "Crusader Icons and Maniera Greca," in I. Hutter, ed., *Byzanz und der Westen: Studien zur Kunst des Europäischen Mittelalters*, SB Wien 432 (Vienna, 1984), 143–70.

<sup>9</sup>The term "Crusader" has come under attack before, but with attempts to replace it rather than disband the very concept: see notably H. Belting, "Zwischen Gotik und Byzanz: Gedanken zur Geschichte der Sächsischen Buchmalerei im 13. Jahrhundert," *Z Kunstg* 41 (1978), 246–47, who suggests "lingua franca" or "international style." See also the remarks of O. Demus in a review of H. Hazard, ed., *The Art and Architecture of the Crusader States*, K. M. Setton, gen. ed., *A History of the Crusades*, IV (Madison, Wisc., 1977), in *ArtB* 61 (1979), 636–37.

<sup>10</sup>V. P. Goss and C. Verzár Bornstein, eds., *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the Period of the Crusades* (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1986), passim. In that volume O. Grabar, "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange," 442, advocated awareness of a plurality of "worlds" to be studied comparatively.

<sup>11</sup>For the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem see, recently, the studies assembled in J. Folda, ed., *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, BAR, International Series 152 (Oxford, 1982); A. Weyl Carr, "East, West, and Icons in Twelfth-Century Outremer," in *The Meeting of Two Worlds*, 347–59; J. Folda, *The Nazareth Capitals and the Crusader Shrine of the Annunciation* (University Park, Pa.: London, 1986), passim; G. Kühnel, *Wall Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Berlin, 1988), passim.

<sup>4</sup>J. Prawer, *Crusader Institutions* (Oxford, 1980), passim.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>6</sup>H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Oxford, 1957), xxxiii.

<sup>7</sup>J. Folda, *Crusader Manuscript Painting at Saint-Jean d'Acre, 1275–1291* (Princeton, 1976), 168.

ism in western Europe from the sixteenth century reflects any absolute of commercial exploitation exclusive of attendant social and cultural factors. In the present case, an appropriate model takes account of the contacts between settlers and native populations where the latter were overwhelmingly in the numerical ascendancy. This advantage enabled them to both use their strength as a source of labor, in a situation where the relationship between land and labor was all-important, and to preserve their ethnic and cultural identity.<sup>12</sup> In the Crusader states of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and northern Syria, it was the upholding of religious and family networks that prevented the erosion of indigenous Christian culture through the colonial dominance of westerners in the political sphere.

While every colonial culture seeks to imprint or superimpose itself on the culture it dominates, nonetheless the host culture can in certain circumstances maintain its hold and even reflect in subtle ways on the dominant culture. S. Bochner has pointed out that: "In cross-cultural contact the participants mutually exert influence on each other's ethnicity."<sup>13</sup> The situation and artistic production of indigenous Christians in the Crusader Near East not only offers insights into preexisting local conditions, but itself documents shifts in taste, style, and "patronage." This proposes religious and ethnic affiliation in place of political dominance and anachronistic nationalistic definition, as the nexus of cultural exchange.

Inadequate attention has been given to local, in the sense of indigenous, artistic traditions in the Crusader states. N. Kanaan has, exceptionally, pointed to the local sources of sculpture in Jerusalem in the twelfth century, while E. Cruikshank Dodd has noted that: "The widest gap in our growing documentation for Crusader art has been the paucity of evidence for an indigenous painting tradition."<sup>14</sup> G. Kühnel has recently described wall painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem as a local "province" of Comnenian art. But in polariz-

ing the work of artists between western and Byzantine Kühnel, too, concurs with the current Eurocentric discourse of "Crusader" art. He concludes: "The manuscripts and icons were created mainly by Western artists copying and trying to faithfully imitate Byzantine models, whereas the wall paintings, at least those of Abu Gosh, Theocistus and Sebaste and partly also those of Bethlehem, were done by Byzantine artists."<sup>15</sup> This view disregards the likely presence and artistic activity of indigenous Christian artists, who made extensive use of Byzantine models in a variety of media. The assumed east-west polarization can be shown to be false once the role of indigenous Christians as cultural intermediaries has been determined.

## II. CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES: THE INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANS

What religious groups made up the indigenous Christian populations under Crusader rule, and what was their relationship to the incoming Latins?

In the Kingdom of Jerusalem and the northern Syrian states, the Orthodox Melkites, Greeks, and Syrians formed one of two major groups. "Monophysite" Armenians and Jacobites, the latter predominantly Syrians (with Copts and Abyssinians), made up the other. From the legal point of view, indigenous Christians were categorized with Muslims and Jews under the secondary status of non-Franks.<sup>16</sup> While this marginalized them as far as direct political influence was concerned, their religious and social organization and demographic strength made Christians a force to be reckoned with. Strong affiliations were sustained through family, religious, and ethnic loyalties. Both Orthodox and Jacobite churches organized themselves in such a way as to enable their networks to survive political upheavals and coercion. Geographically, the ecclesiastical boundaries of their patriarchates crossed rather than coincided with political frontiers, enabling monastic establishments to be maintained as the foci of spiritual life across both Latin and Muslim territories. Political elusiveness was

<sup>12</sup>A useful analysis is that of N. Pollock, "Contacts between Settlers and Native Peoples," in A. Lemon and N. Pollock, eds., *Studies in Overseas Settlement and Population* (London, 1980), 81–101. He cites (p. 99) the instance of Kenya, in which "The White community was far too small for the economic and political aspirations built around it."

<sup>13</sup>S. Bochner, "The Social Psychology of Cross-Cultural Relations," in S. Bochner, ed., *Cultures in Contact* (Oxford, 1983), 36.

<sup>14</sup>N. Kanaan, "Local Christian Art in Twelfth Century Jerusalem," 1–2, *IEJ* 23 (1973), 167–75, 221–29. E. Cruikshank Dodd, "Notes on the Monastery of Mar Mousa Al-Habashi, near Nebek, Syria," in Folda, ed., *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, 174–75.

<sup>15</sup>Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 205.

<sup>16</sup>On the indigenous Christian groups, see B. Hamilton, *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church* (London, 1980), esp. chaps. 7, 8, 12, 13. On their minority status, see J. Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States: The 'Minorities,'" in N. P. Zacour and H. W. Hazard, eds., *The Impact of the Crusades on the Near East*, K. M. Setton, gen. ed., *A History of the Crusades*, V (London, 1985), 59–115, with summary bibliography, to which should be added the neglected but important study of E. Cerulli, *I Etiopi in Palestina*, I (Rome, 1943).

turned to advantage, and flexibility offered the potential to play off mainstream political factions.

Northern Syria, in the geographical sense employed by C. Cahen, was distinguished from the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem to the south by a greater indigenous Christian population, inherited from its Byzantine past.<sup>17</sup> Orthodox and Jacobite communities predominated over the Latin minority in the Principality of Antioch. But while indigenous populations were smaller in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, their interests were well represented by the Orthodox Byzantine Church through its protection of the holy shrines. The Frankish rulers of Jerusalem fostered links with indigenous communities of the north. In this respect the ascendant Armenian community in the County of Edessa proved a significant cultural (and political) intermediary, even though direct political control was lost by the Crusaders here as early as 1151. Formal ties included intermarriage by Frankish kings with Armenian princesses in the early days of the Latin Kingdom. The second wife of Baldwin I, Count of Edessa, who succeeded to the throne of Jerusalem on his coronation in Bethlehem in 1100, was an Armenian princess.<sup>18</sup> Also as count of Edessa, the future Baldwin II married an Armenian princess, Morphia, the daughter of Gabriel of Melitene.<sup>19</sup> Morphia's faith was—unusually—Orthodox. The tradition of cultural and religious patronage that she established was maintained by her daughters, especially Queen Melisende. It was arguably this special relationship between the Latin rulers and the indigenous populations, "Monophysite" as well as Orthodox, that Emperor Manuel I was to exploit at Bethlehem in the 1160s.

Despite legal strictures, the attitude of western settlers toward the indigenous Christians evolved throughout the period of Frankish Latin rule, with the position of the Jacobites improving at the expense of the Orthodox. A shift in attitude in the second half of the twelfth century accompanied an increased awareness by the Franks of the differences between the indigenous Christian groups.

<sup>17</sup>C. Cahen, *La Syrie du nord à l'époque des croisades et la principauté franque d'Antioche* (Paris, 1940), *passim*.

<sup>18</sup>B. Hamilton, "Women in the Crusader States: The Queens of Jerusalem 1100–90," in D. Baker, ed., *Medieval Women* (dedicated and presented to Professor Rosalind M. T. Hill on the occasion of her seventieth birthday) (Oxford, 1978), 144–45, gives an account of Arda's repudiation by 1105 and her subsequent moves first to the convent of St. Anne's, Jerusalem—at the time, he suggests, still an eastern rite community—and thence to Constantinople.

<sup>19</sup>Hamilton, "Queens of Jerusalem," 147–48.

The decade 1160–70 was the turning point in this respect. But this shift owes much to the initiative of eastern Christians themselves, originating in northern Syria. A conspicuously high profile was adopted by their ecclesiastical leaders, especially the Syrian Jacobite patriarch Michael (1166–99) and his Armenian counterpart, Catholicos Nerses III Šnorhali (1166–73). By this time the integration of western settlers had developed to the extent of a broader concern with the language, rites, and customs of the various indigenous Christian peoples or "nations."<sup>20</sup>

Circumstances were now ripe for the more sympathetic reception and transmission of eastern works of art. Through the activities of indigenous Christians, a Byzantine and eastern Christian heritage was retained and developed under Latin rule. I hope to show, with the mosaics of the Church of the Nativity as a case study, that this process involved indigenous Christians at all stages in the planning and execution of an artistic commission and has implications for understanding "Crusader" art.

### III. BETHLEHEM: THE MOSAIC PROGRAM AND ITS INSCRIPTIONS

The complex of buildings constructed around the cave of the Nativity retained its privileged position under Latin rule as one of the major *loca sancta*. It comprised several elements, of which the main basilica was one, constructed above the shrine of the Nativity of Christ. Built by Constantine, its east end was remodeled as a triconch by Justinian (Fig. 1).<sup>21</sup> The dedication of the basilica to the Virgin integrates it with the grotto below, a factor respected in the redecoration undertaken in the twelfth century.<sup>22</sup>

Thanks to G. Kühnel's recent work in cleaning the mosaics, it is now possible to view them as an entirely twelfth-century scheme.<sup>23</sup> Throughout,

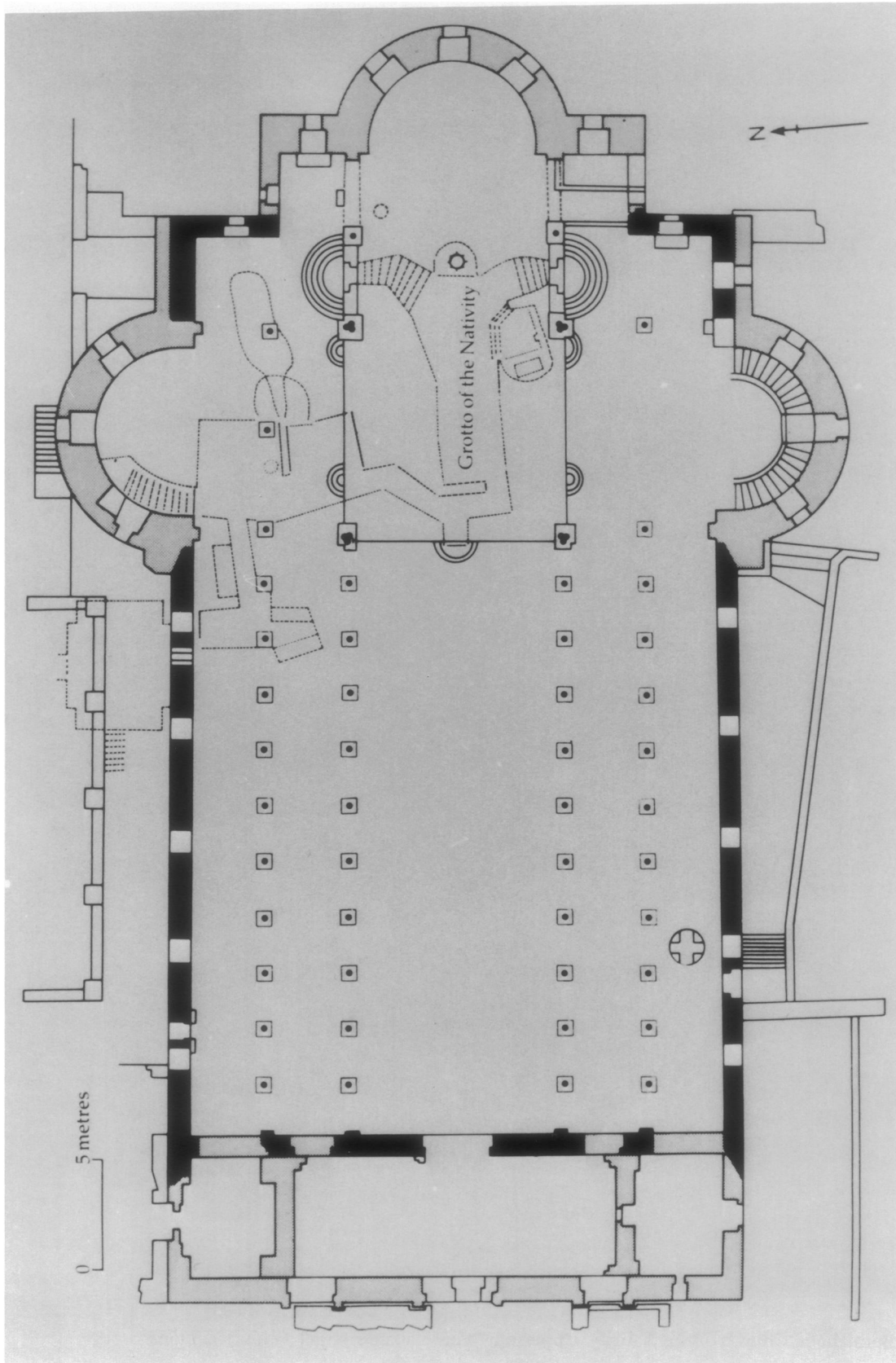
<sup>20</sup>A.-D. v. den Brincken, *Die "Nationes Christianorum Orientalium" im Verständnis der lateinischen Historiographie* (Cologne-Vienna, 1973), esp. 3–4, 451–52.

<sup>21</sup>See recently R. Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Aldershot, 1988), 98, 100 with fig. 60. See also the summary and bibliography by M. Restle, "Bethlehem," in K. Wessel, ed., *RBK*, I (Stuttgart, 1966), cols. 602–12, with fig. 2.

<sup>22</sup>The church was still known as St. Mary's in the 17th century: Quaresmius referred to the "Ichnographia Ecclesiae et Conventus S. Mariae Bethlehem," in F. Quaresmius, *Historica theologica et moralis Terrae Sanctae Elucidatio*, II (Antwerp, 1693), 677, with plan.

<sup>23</sup>This was previously suggested by V. Tzaferis, "The Wall Mosaics in the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem," *Actes du XVe Congrès International d'Études Byzantines* (Athens, Sept. 1976), II

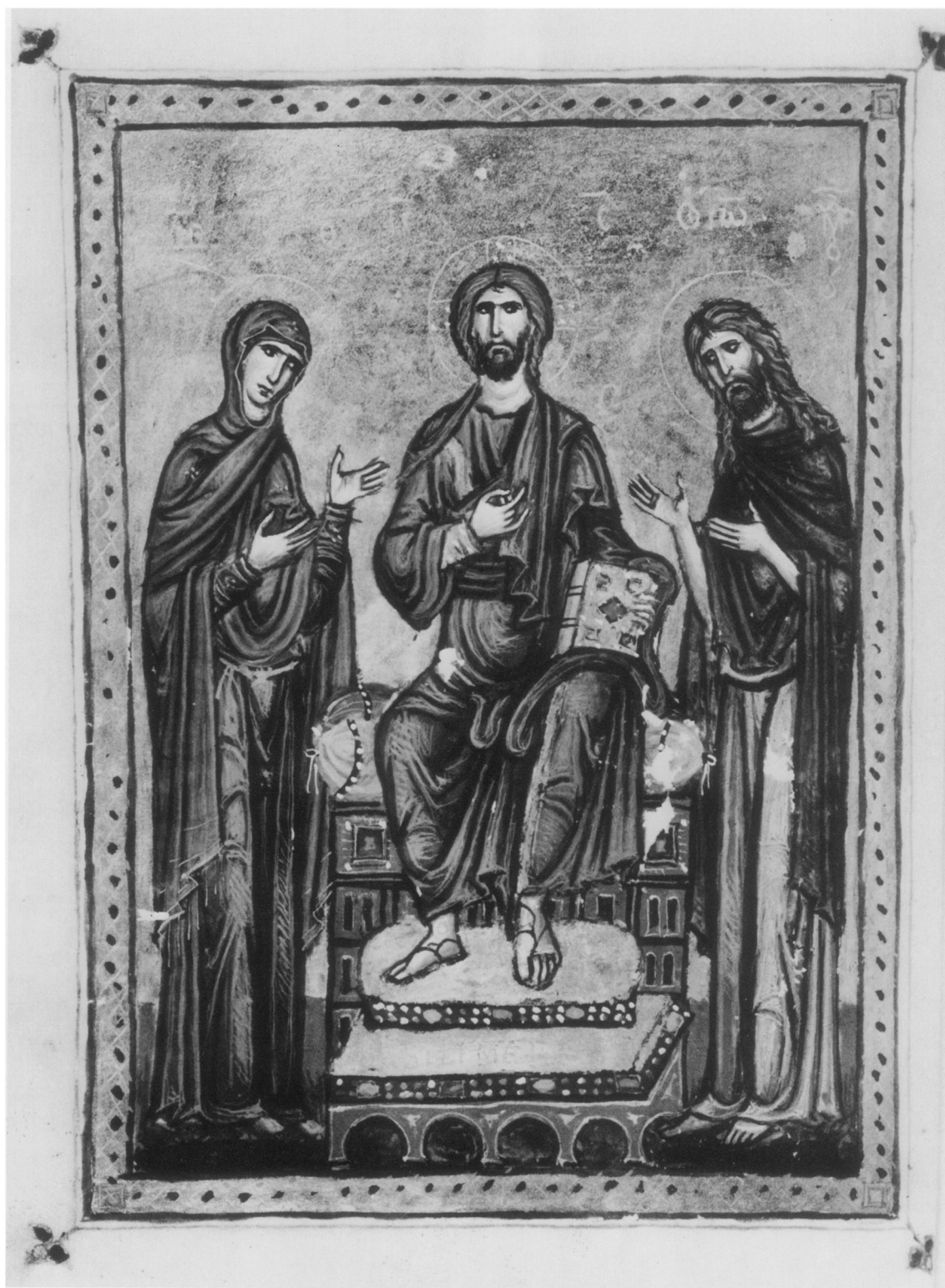




1 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity, ground plan (after Milburn)



2 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. Upper north nave arcade, angel with inscriptions



3 British Library, Egerton 1139, fol. 12v. Deesis (photo: British Library)



4 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity.  
Column painting, Glykophilousa



5 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity.  
Column painting of Fusca

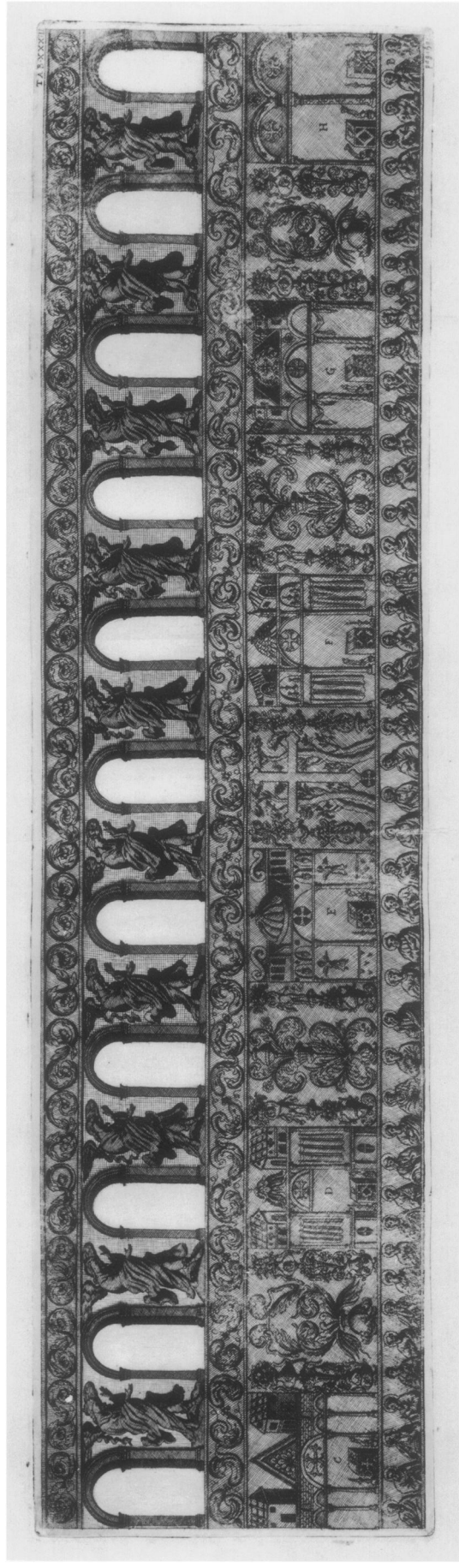




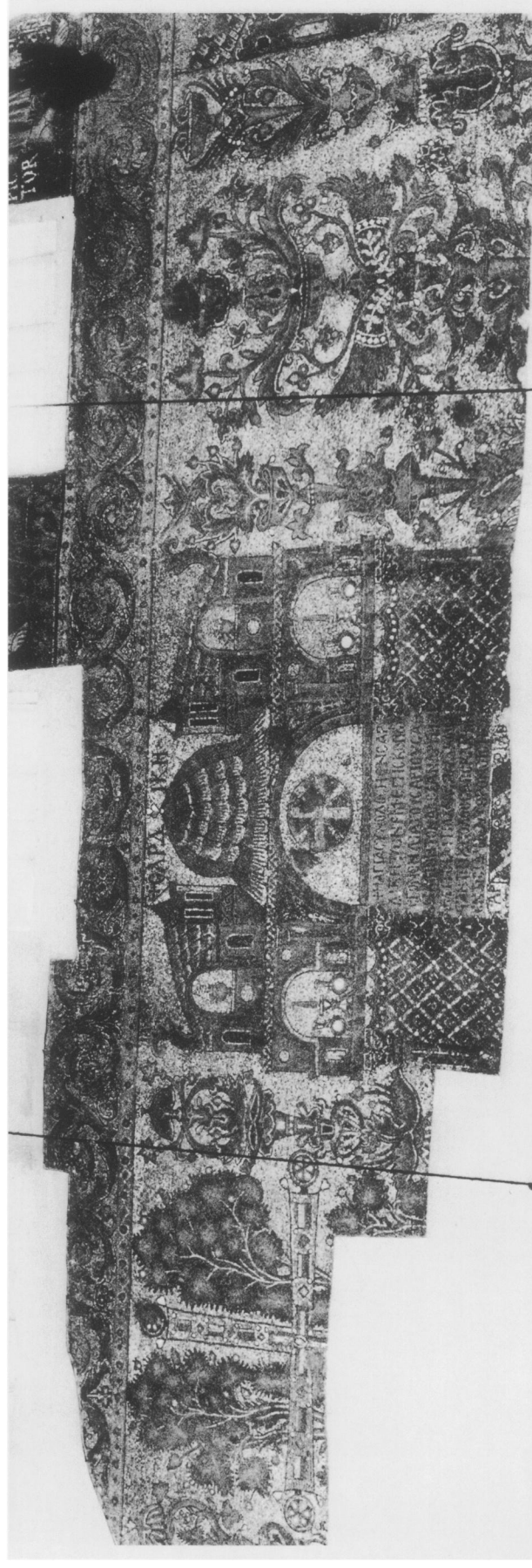
6 British Library, Egerton 1139, fol. 211r. St. Agnes  
(photo: British Library)



7 Palermo, Cappella Palatina. North sanctuary chapel, west wall. Female martyrs  
(photo: after Demus)



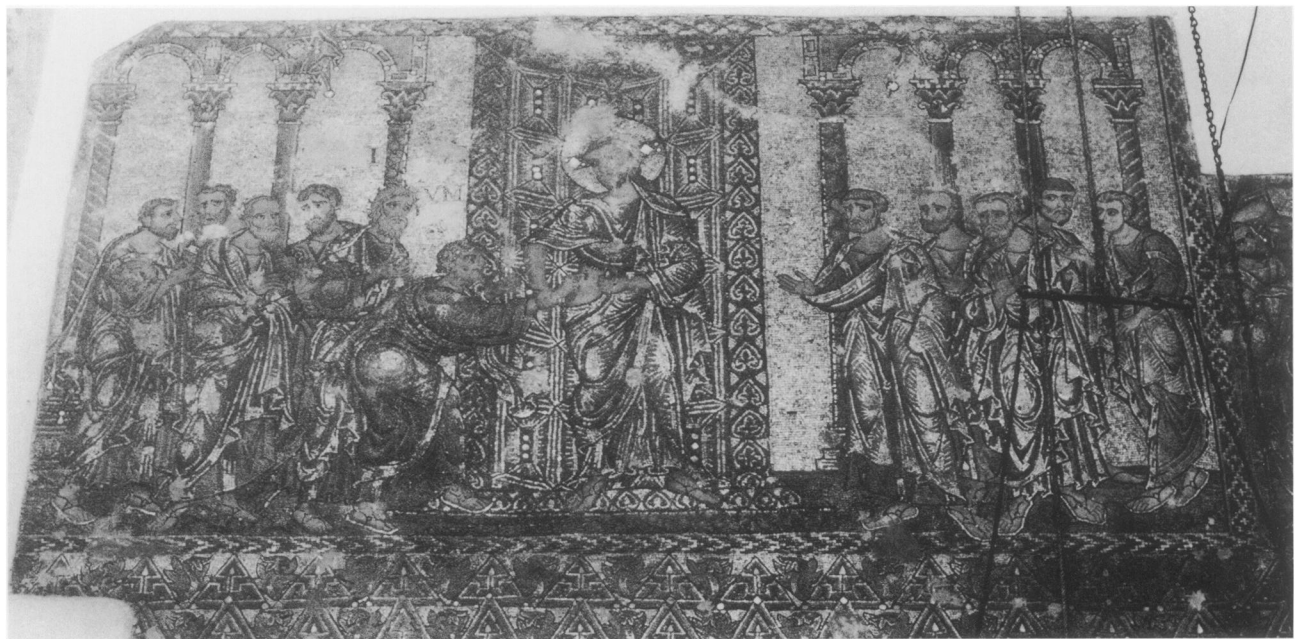
8 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. Mosaics of provincial councils, north nave wall. Engraving from Ciampini, 1693 (photo: British Library)



9 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. North nave arcade, Council of Sardica, flanked by cross and candelabra



10 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. South nave arcade, Jacob and Mathan

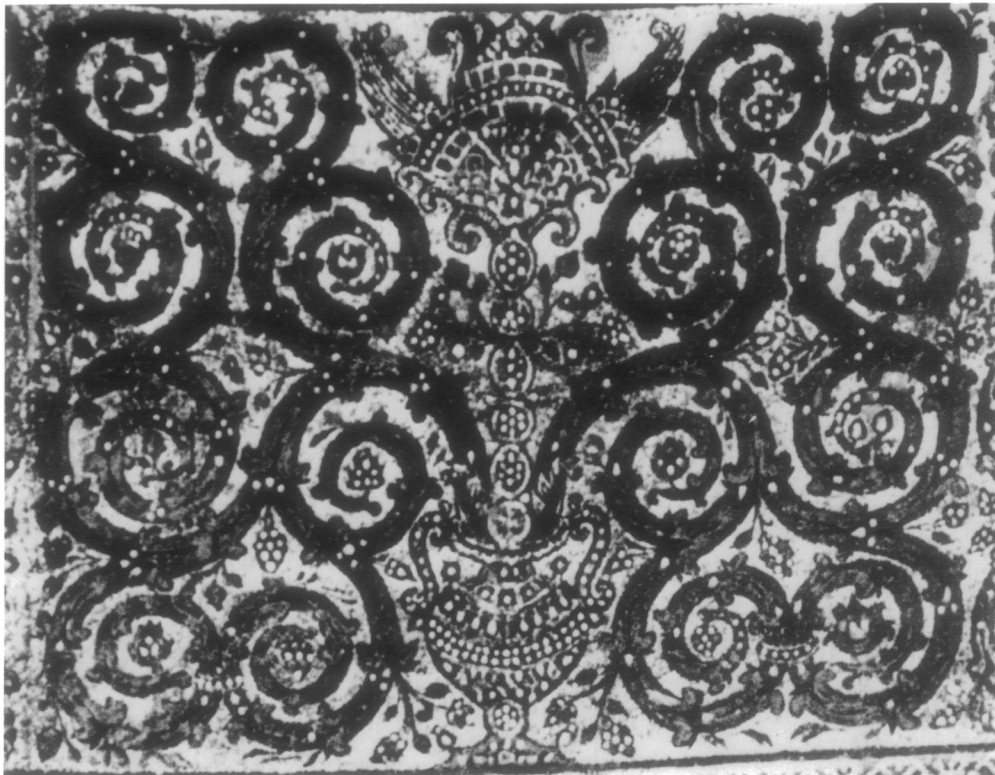


11 Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity. North transept, east wall. Incredulity of Thomas





12 Damascus, Great Mosque. Courtyard, western arcade wall, architectural detail from the *Barada* mosaic



13 Jerusalem, Dome of the Rock. Mosaics at base of drum (photo: after Van Berchem)



the program related to the Incarnation. A mosaic of the Nativity, inscribed in Latin, is still partially preserved in the grotto.<sup>24</sup> John Phocas, the Cretan pilgrim who visited in 1185, gives an emotive description of this mosaic as a visual narrative of the Birth and Adoration, to be contemplated as a statement of historical fact.<sup>25</sup> The program of the basilica above had a complementary function: to interpret this event. The genealogy, life, and Passion of Christ culminated in the representation of the Virgin and Child in the apse of the main sanctuary. Official church sanction was provided by the mosaics of church councils in the nave. Much has been destroyed of the mosaic program. But later pilgrims' accounts, including that of the Franciscan friar Quaresmius published in 1639, make possible the reconstruction of the now lost main sanctuary mosaics, as well as the fragmentary nave mosaics and part of the New Testament scheme of the transepts.<sup>26</sup>

Each of these sections—choir, nave, and transepts—was accompanied by an inscription. The specific nature of these trilingual inscriptions in-

vites identification of the mosaicists and their affiliations, and reinterpretation of the program as a whole.

The first pair of inscriptions is partially preserved in both Greek and Latin on the south side of the apse (see ground plan, Fig. 1). It names the monk Ephraim and records the completion of the work in this part of the church. The content of the original Greek inscription has been verified by A. Cutler on the basis of its copy in Jerusalem, Greek Patr. cod. 57, dated 1182.<sup>27</sup> This records that Ephraim the "monk, artist (ιστοριογράφος), and mosaicist" completed the work in 1169, under the Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenos and King Amalric of Jerusalem during the episcopacy of Ralph, Bishop of Jerusalem. Little now survives of the once elaborate Latin verse, which extended to the left of the Greek toward the center of the sanctuary. It originally opened with a list of Amalric's virtues including that of "foe of impiety." Also in the Latin, preceding reference to Ralph as "teacher of the Church," and Ephraim as the mosaicist, Manuel was designated "ruler of the Greeks" and sponsor of the project ("dator largus").<sup>28</sup> While this wording leaves no doubt of

(B), *Art et archéologie* (Athens, 1981), 891–900. It has been substantiated by the recent cleaning of the mosaics, for which see G. Kühnel, "Die Mosaiken und Säulenmalereien der Geburtskirche in Bethlehem: Ein byzantinisches Ausschmückungsprogramm der Kreuzfahrerzeit," *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Résumé des Kurzbeiträge* (Vienna, 1981), Section 10.2; idem, "Neue Feldarbeiten zur musivischen und malerischen Ausstattung der Geburts-Basilika in Bethlehem," *Kunstchronik* 37 (1984), 507–13; idem, "Das Ausschmückungsprogramm der Geburtsbasilika in Bethlehem: Byzanz und Abendland im Königreich Jerusalem," *Boreas: Münstersche Beiträge zur Archäologie* 10 (1987), 133–49.

<sup>24</sup>B. Bagatti, *Gli Antichi Edifici Sacri di Betlemme*, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Collectio Maior 9 (Jerusalem, repr. 1983), 130, suggests it to be the work of Ephraim. S. De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum Terrae Sanctae*, Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 21 (Jerusalem, 1974), 195–96; J. Folda, "Painting and Sculpture in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," in Hazard, ed., *Art and Architecture*, 257–58, with pl. xxxia.

<sup>25</sup>J. Wilkinson with J. Hill and W. F. Ryan, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London, 1988), 33. The aim of reproducing historical fact was inherited from previous mosaics at the same spot. In the early 9th century Epiphanius wrote that in the Church of the Nativity "the two grottoes are lined with gold and decorated with images which represent the event as it happened": PG 120, col. 264; M. Van Berchem, "The Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem and of the Great Mosque at Damascus," in K. A. C. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, I, *Umayyads* (Oxford, 1932), 166.

<sup>26</sup>Quaresmius, *Historica theologia*, 645–73, chap. XIII; Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 147–68. Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 58–68, 79–93. A summary account of the mosaic program is given by T. S. R. Boase, "Mosaic, Painting, and the Minor Arts," in Hazard, ed., *Art and Architecture*, 119–21, with bibliography, note 5. See also G. Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 133–49.

<sup>27</sup>A. Cutler, "Ephraim, Mosaicist of Bethlehem: The Evidence from Jerusalem," *Jewish Art* 12–13 (1986–87), 179–81. Cutler (p. 179 and fig. 1) reproduces the Greek, and translates it, as follows: 'Ετελειώθη τὸ παρὸν ἔργον διὰ χειρὸς Ἐφραίμ μοναχοῦ, ἱστοριογράφου καὶ(αὶ) μουσιάτορος ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Μανουὴλ μεγάλου [β] βασιλέως πορφυρογεννήτου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ καὶ(αὶ) ἐπὶ τὰς ἡμέρας τοῦ μεγάλου ὀνότος Ἱεροσολύμων, κυροῦ (Ἀμμορεῖ) καὶ(αὶ) τοῦ τῆς ἀγί(ας) Βηθλεὲμ, ἀγιωτάτου [ἐ] επισκόπου, κυροῦ Ραουλή ἐν ἔτει ἔχθρ(ι)ν(δικτιώνο) β. . . "The present work was finished by the hand of Ephraim the monk, painter and mosaicist, in the reign of the great emperor Manuel Porphyrogenetos Komnenos and in the time of the great king of Jerusalem, Lord Ammori, and of the most holy bishop of holy Bethlehem, the Lord Raoul, in the year 6677, second indiction." The inscription is best reproduced by G. Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, fig. 2, which shows that the second half of the fourth line is badly damaged and the fifth line appears to have been destroyed to accommodate electricity cables along the cornice.

<sup>28</sup>"Rex Amalricus, custos virtutis, amicus largus, honestatis comes, hostis et impietatis, iustici(a)e cultor (et) pietatis, criminis ultor, quintus regnabat. Et Gr(a)ecis imperitabat Emmanuel, dator largus, pius imperitator. Pr(a)esul vivebat hic, Ecclesiamq(ue) docebat, Pontificis dignus Radulphus honore, benignus. Cum manus his E(f)rem fertur fecisse (tua artem)."

Most recently on the reconstruction of the Latin on the basis of travelers' accounts, see: De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 198. M. McGann in Cutler, "Ephraim, Mosaicist of Bethlehem," 182 note 22, suggests the correction to the end. The Church of the Nativity was held in respect by the kings of Jerusalem and (as noted above) the first Latin king, Baldwin I, had been crowned there: J. La Monte, *Feudal Monarchy in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem 1100–1291* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), 6; E. Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic: The Royal Programmes of Norman Sicily* (Oxford, 1990), 4 note 16.

Manuel's superiority, the nature of Amalric's allegiance to Manuel is still unknown.<sup>29</sup> Certainly the mosaics cannot have been regarded by Manuel as simply "a gesture to show his suzerainty," as S. Runciman was content to put it.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, as Runciman himself has acknowledged, Manuel's claim to the Holy Land was tenuous compared to his more serious claim to the Principality of Antioch in north Syria.<sup>31</sup> It will be argued here that the mosaics are more subtle, indicating Manuel's acceptance and support of Amalric as king of Jerusalem, while claiming for himself a grander theological-political role as Constantine's successor, as arbiter of Christianity and imperial protector of the Holy Places.

Second, there are inscriptions naming Basilios, artist and ecclesiastic, among the nave mosaics.<sup>32</sup> The name appears in Latin at the foot of one of the procession of angels in the upper north nave arcade (Fig. 2): *Basilios pictor*, repeated, with the mosaicist's ecclesiastical status, vertically in Syriac to the right of the angel: ܒܝܫܠܝܡܫܡܡܫܐܢܐ (i.e., *mšammšānā*): "Basil the deacon depicted (this)." In the south arcade opposite, the Greek *Basilios*, abbreviated to the letters BC, flanks a cross medalion on the tympanum of the image of the first Council of Constantinople. Stylistic differences between north and south should no longer be seen as indicative of a difference in date. Basil signed the north wall as his own work; the abbreviation BC on the south wall opposite may indicate that the mosaics of the ecumenical councils were in his charge, rather than undertaken actually by his hand.

Third, a partial Greek inscription was still visible in the seventeenth century when it was included in Quaresmuis' description of the mosaics at the

angle of the wall return separating the south transept apse from the presbytery. This gave the beginning of a third name, probably also an artist's signature. It read Μνήσθητι, κ(ύρι)ε, τὸν δούλόν σου Ζαν. . . . "Remember, Lord, your servant Zan. . . ." This, too, may well be a twelfth-century inscription. It is included with the others in Quaresmuis' account, written before extensive damage was done to the mosaics and subsequent changes made to the remaining transept mosaics.<sup>34</sup>

Stylistic differences between the north and south nave mosaics, which continue into the transepts, have been particularly stressed.<sup>35</sup> But these cannot be considered cut-and-dried distinctions, as stylistic comparison of details can be made across the divisions of the program.<sup>36</sup> There must have been considerable overlap between the work of different mosaicists, probably all ecclesiastics, responsible for the three different sections: Ephraim the choir, Basil the nave, and arguably a third artist, the transepts.

The importance of the inscriptions to an understanding of the working of artists in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem has been recognized without any consensus being reached as to their status

<sup>29</sup> J. L. La Monte, "To What Extent was the Byzantine Empire the Suzerain of the Latin Crusading States?" *Byzantion* 7 (1932), 253–64; H. Mayer, trans. J. Gillingham, *The Crusades* (Oxford, repr. 1985), 124–25; S. Runciman, "The Visit of King Amalric I to Constantinople in 1171," in B. Z. Kedar, H. E. Mayer, R. C. Smail, eds., *Outremer: Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem Presented to Joshua Prawer* (Jerusalem, 1982), 154–55.

<sup>30</sup> Runciman, "The Visit of King Amalric I," 158.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>32</sup> W. Harvey et al., *The Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem* (London, 1910), respectively pls. 10 and 11; H. Vincent and F.-M. Abel, *Bethléem: Le Sanctuaire de la Nativité* (Paris, 1914), 164–65; Bagatti, *Gli Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 81–82 with photo 36; De Sandomeni, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 203. For the Syriac inscription: Kühnel, "Neue Feldarbeiten," 512; *idem*, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 148 with fig. 9 and note 47; *idem*, *Wall Painting*, pl. xxxvi (61) in color. I am grateful for Dr. S. Brock's comments on this inscription.

<sup>33</sup> Quaresmuis, *Historica theologica*, 673, which includes fragments of a date; Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 167; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 63. It is difficult to deduce what this name was: no name beginning with these letters is included in the list of scribes by M. Vogel and V. Gardthausen, *Die griechischen Schreiber des Mittelalters und der Renaissance* (repr. Hildesheim, 1966). On the other hand, Zan is the Venetian form of John, as Prof. A. E. Laiou kindly informs me. The other two names are found among the scribes of Greek manuscripts: for Βασίλειος see Vogel and Gardthausen, *ibid.*, 53–58, and R. Barbour, *Greek Literary Hands* (Oxford, 1981), 13; for Ephraim see Vogel and Gardthausen, 124–25.

<sup>34</sup> Changes are most visible in the Incredulity of Thomas scene, for which see below, note 86.

<sup>35</sup> Stern, "Les représentations des conciles dans l'église de la Nativité à Bethléem," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 105–6; Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 142–43.

<sup>36</sup> The collaboration between the artists (and their assistants) can be shown on the basis of stylistic criteria. For example, one of Basil's angels in the north nave arcade (reproduced by Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, pl. xxxvi [62]) can be compared with figures from scenes in other sections of the program. One, in the south transept, is the apostle pointing the way in the Entry into Jerusalem, who strikes the same pose as the angel as he steps forward onto his right leg, his weakly drawn limbs and drapery folds relying on stark black and red lines to give them definition. A loose mosaic technique, with cubes set relatively far apart, is also common to both. Tighter, brighter mosaics with a preponderance of gold, silver, and mother-of-pearl alongside the green, blue, and red make up the surviving fragments of provincial councils of the lower north nave arcade and New Testament scenes of the north transept. But here, too, comparison can be made with the angel: the circular rouged cheek reappears as a facial feature of the apostles in the Incredulity of Thomas (here Fig. 11) as well as the Ascension.

or interpretation as a group integral with the mosaic program. Instead the first and second inscriptions have individually been conscripted in support of arguments in favor of the western or Byzantine origin of artists at work in the Latin Kingdom.

Interest has centered on the question of whether Basil was the same artist who signed the name in Latin, *Basili(us) me fecit*, on the footstool of Christ (Fig. 3) in the Deesis picture in the Psalter of Queen Melisende (British Library, Egerton 1139), produced at the scriptorium of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, probably in 1149 or only shortly before.<sup>37</sup> Buchthal was reluctant to accept this identification, as he considered the illuminator, unlike the mosaicist, to have been a Latin, albeit one who had received his training in Constantinople.<sup>38</sup> In reviving the view that the painter and the mosaicist were the same, A. Borg proposed that "Basil" represented a trade name identifying one of a limited number of (western) artists in business in the Latin Kingdom.<sup>39</sup> But this limited, western-restricted view of art in the Latin Kingdom is unconcerned with the circumstances of each commission. The important ecclesiastical designation of the mosaicist as deacon, not found in the Psalter, is unaccounted for. The twenty-year time lapse between the two projects also reduces the likelihood that the same artist worked on both.<sup>40</sup> This is not to deny consideration of the continuity between work on the Psalter and at Bethlehem, especially as both projects involved members of the court in Jerusalem as patrons, but insists that discussion be widened beyond the "Basil" question.

Focusing on the Greek apse inscription, Cutler envisaged Ephraim as a Byzantine mosaicist imported with a workshop from Constantinople at the behest of Emperor Manuel. As the designer (so Cutler translates ἱστοριογράφος) and member of

the shop (μουσιώτορος), Ephraim was, according to Cutler, the only one directly responsible to Manuel.<sup>41</sup> It is true that Ephraim is given prominence through being named in the apse. But it does not follow from this that he must have come from Constantinople or that the work of the other artists is not just as indicative of the intentions of the plan as a whole. What of these other artists? Basil's Syrian affiliation is played down by Cutler as having "little bearing on the size and nature of the organisation necessary to the embellishment of the Nativity Church."<sup>42</sup> As Orthodox ecclesiastics from Palestine, however, the artists would be in a more effective position to represent Manuel's interests, in conformity with their own, than would outsiders from Constantinople, or anywhere else.

Most significant in this respect is Basil's Syriac inscription. Kühnel, who published it, correctly recognized its importance in identifying local Orthodox artistic involvement. But he assumed it to be "implicitly, the only tangible indication of the existence of a local school of wall mosaic active, perhaps, even before the coming of the Crusaders to the Holy Land."<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, the inscription is arguably the tip of the iceberg of an unbroken indigenous Christian artistic tradition.

Syriac was a liturgical, not a spoken, language and its presence may say as much about veneration in the church as strictly about the origin of the mosaicist. The format of the Greek and Syriac inscriptions, which include Ephraim's and Basil's ecclesiastical status, acts just as a scribal signature in a manuscript. Basil's Syriac inscription is even prefaced by a star such as frequently marks the beginning of a sentence in a Syriac manuscript.<sup>44</sup> By adding their names to the mosaics the artists were acknowledging responsibility for the results. The signatures serve to verify the content, in this case of the images in the mosaicists' charge.

The Orthodox affiliation of the artists at Bethlehem is a key factor which would override an ethnic sense of identity, Greek or Syrian. Ephraim appears as μοναχός first and foremost in his inscription, and this designated his position in an Orthodox monastery, probably a Palestinian one.

<sup>37</sup> The Deesis is one of the full-page New Testament cycle with which the Psalter opens: Buchthal, *Miniature Painting*, 2, pl. 12b. For the Psalter's dating see A. Borg, "The Lost Apse Mosaic of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem," in A. Borg and A. Martindale, eds., *The Vanishing Past: Studies of Medieval Art, Liturgy and Metrology Presented to Christopher Hohler* (Oxford, 1981), 10–11, favoring Yvette, Melisende's sister and abbess of the convent of St. Lazarus at Bethany, as the patroness of the manuscript.

<sup>38</sup> Buchthal, *Miniature Painting*, xxix, 2–9.

<sup>39</sup> Borg, "Lost Apse Mosaic," 11.

<sup>40</sup> T. S. R. Boase, "The Arts in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," *JWarb* 2 (1938–39), 14–15, attempted to reconcile the dates by attributing the Psalter to Yvette toward her death in 1180. But Boase himself recognized the importance of the patronage by Melisende, with her sisters, of Syrian Jacobites and the possible role this played in encouraging a local style: "this school of illumination may represent some such local interest."

<sup>41</sup> Cutler, "Ephraim, Mosaicist of Bethlehem," 182–83.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>43</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, xiv. Local artists have long been suspected of providing the backbone of many of the artistic projects in the Latin Kingdom: R. W. Hamilton, *The Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem: A Guide* (Jerusalem, 1947), 57, wrote: "it is at least possible that Ephraim was a local man."

<sup>44</sup> On this point see Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 148 note 47, which incorporates the observations of S. Brock.

There is no reason to doubt the significance of Basil's Syrian affiliation. He was a Syrian Melkite, for whom the presence of the liturgical language of Syriac was indicative. At the time, the ethnic term *Syrianus* invariably designated an Arabic-speaking Orthodox using Syriac as a liturgical language.<sup>45</sup> Basil could have recently come from the north, or was already settled in Palestine, even Bethlehem itself, as a member of one of the communities of Syrians settled near this and other pilgrimage sites. As a deacon he could have been one of numerous eastern Christians controlled by a Latin upper clergy. Orthodox Syrians were actually favored over Greeks, with some Syrians reaching prominence within the system. Basil, alongside Ephraim and the third mosaicist, would have had access to the Orthodox monastic establishments in Palestine, with their famous manuscript collections. These included the theological and cultural centers of Mar Saba near Jerusalem and St. Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai with multilingual Orthodox communities, including Syrians among their number.<sup>46</sup> It is this bedrock of Orthodoxy that Emperor Manuel supported in his restoration of Holy Land monasteries and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem itself.<sup>47</sup>

The Orthodox monastic Palestinian milieu from which the mosaicists came is represented by ascetic saints among the twenty-nine column paintings in the nave of the Church of the Nativity. Euthymius, Theodosius, and Saba, whose portraits appear,

had long-established monasteries in the Jordan desert dedicated to them.<sup>48</sup> St. John the Baptist, whose monastery in the Jordan valley came to be restored by Manuel at the request of its abbot, is also portrayed on one of the columns.<sup>49</sup>

The relationship of the Bethlehem column paintings to the mosaics, and hence their dating, is a matter for debate. One of the paintings, the Glykophilousa, is inscribed in Latin with the date 1130 (Fig. 4).<sup>50</sup> The work was, then, under way by that year. Kühnel has convincingly argued that the column paintings were undertaken as a coherent cycle rather than "votive pictures painted at random by itinerant artists."<sup>51</sup> But Kühnel undercuts his own argument in proposing that most of the column paintings, with the exception of the dated Glykophilousa, were undertaken later, contemporaneously with the mosaics.<sup>52</sup> There is no reason to detach the Glykophilousa from its fellows. Stylistically the Glykophilousa is not alone: the looping drapery folds, and accentuation of one leg with semicircular shapes and sharp V folds, is repeated in other paintings, of which Fusca (Fig. 5) is just one.<sup>53</sup> This shows that several of the columns were undertaken as early as the 1130s. The date 1130

<sup>45</sup> For discussion of the term *Syrianus* in contemporary Frankish sources as referring invariably to Orthodox Christians who spoke Arabic but used the liturgical language of Syriac, see G. Every, "Syrian Christians in Palestine in the Early Middle Ages," *EChQ* 6 (1946), 363–66; Hamilton, *Latin Church*, 159–61. Awareness of the integration of Syrians among the Orthodox communities of Palestine makes the suggestion of Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 161, that Ephraim was a Syrian approached during the visit of Manuel to Antioch in the company of Amalric and Raoul, needlessly complicated.

<sup>46</sup> Every, "Syrian Christians in Palestine," 364, 366; Mayer, *Crusades*, 124–25; Hamilton, *Latin Church*, esp. 182–84; Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States," 69. G. Every, "Syrian Christians in Jerusalem," *EChQ* 7 (1947), 48.

<sup>47</sup> Prawer, "Social Classes in the Crusader States," 76, with note 52. For Orthodox monasteries as centers of manuscript production in the 12th century: A. Weyl Carr, "A Group of Provincial Manuscripts from the Twelfth Century," *DOP* 36 (1982), 51–52. The same author reviews Manuel's patronage in Palestine in "The Mural Paintings of Abu Ghosh and the Patronage of Manuel Comnenus in the Holy Land," in Folda, ed., *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, 215–34. For Manuel's support of the restoration of the Holy Sepulcher, Jerusalem: B. Hamilton, "Rebuilding Zion: The Holy Places of Jerusalem in the Twelfth Century," *Studies in Church History* 14 (1977), repr. in idem, *Monastic Reform, Catharism and the Crusades* (London, 1979), no. XI, 107.

<sup>48</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 88–92, 126 with pls. xxiv (39); xxv (40–41); xxvii (44). The positioning of the column paintings is shown *ibid.*, fig. 3. The early 12th-century account of the Orthodox pilgrim, the Russian abbot Daniel, attests to the flourishing of the great St. Saba monastery and others dedicated to Sts. Theodosius and Euthymius: Wilkinson et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 139–41. Later in the century these were visited by John Phocas: *ibid.*, 327–28. See also Hamilton, *Latin Church*, 166–67. The ascetic tradition represented at Bethlehem is embedded in the past. For the mention of two stylite saints in the early 9th-century *Commematorium* alongside the clergy and monks, see J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster, 1977), 137.

<sup>49</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 36–39, 126, pl. xii. For the restoration of the monastery of St. John mentioned by John Phocas, see Wilkinson et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 329.

<sup>50</sup> Glykophilousa: Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 15–22, 138–40, pls. III–VI with the date treated, 17–19, 138–39, 140 and attribution to an Italian artist. The male and two female figures in prayer below the Glykophilousa are assumed to be contemporary donors.

<sup>51</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 128–29, quoting Folda, "Painting and Sculpture," 255.

<sup>52</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 129, describes the paintings as belonging to a "single style trend" and yet (p. 146) contradicts this by arguing that "Mary Glykophilousa must be regarded as a single votive painting made, indeed, in 1130 or thereabouts, commissioned by a pilgrim or a family that had arrived in Bethlehem and was able to mark the occasion by the donation of a painting on one of the columns."

<sup>53</sup> Fusca: Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 102–5, pls. xxx (50), xxxi (52). Comparison with others would demonstrate the same point, for example, Marina/Margaret (105–12, pl. xxx [51]), or the male figures Elijah (32–36, pls. x–xi) and St. Bartholomew (43–45, pl. xiv [22]).

falls during the time (1129–31) that Baldwin II was making grants to the Holy Sepulcher, with his daughter Melisende included in the official documents.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps Bethlehem, too, was the beneficiary of royal patronage shortly before Baldwin's death in 1131, with the work continuing under his heirs, including Melisende.

Western saints are represented, alongside the ascetics and Virgin and Child paintings appropriate to the dedication of the church. These saints' portraits are devotional icons comparable with those heading the prayers completing Queen Melisende's Psalter, of ca. 1149. The tapering form of St. Fusca (Fig. 5) stands facing front, on the point of stepping forward onto the right leg, as does St. Agnes in the Psalter (Fig. 6).<sup>55</sup> The movement is anticipated with barbed folds above and below the knee which contrast with the still, straight left leg. These features are common with the outer of the three female martyrs in mosaic at the Cappella Palatina in Palermo (Fig. 7), datable to the reign of Roger II in the 1140s.<sup>56</sup>

Not all the Bethlehem column paintings need be assigned to the 1130s–40s. A few, datable by comparison with later mosaics in the Cappella Palatina largely undertaken under Roger's son William I (1154–66), may well have been completed in the 1150s–60s. These include St. Catald positioned in the nave of both churches.<sup>57</sup> But what is apparent is that in spanning the whole period between ca. 1130 and the 1160s the column paintings were largely in place before the campaign of mosaic work, and probably influenced it, both in style and

content.<sup>58</sup> Aligned with Virgin and Child and western saints are ascetics. These represent the existing Orthodox communities patronized by Manuel in his intervention in the politics of the Holy Land in the 1160s, and to which the mosaicists were affiliated.

The mosaic inscriptions, being trilingual, serve to convey nuances within the multicultural milieu of twelfth-century Bethlehem. The Greek and Latin inscriptions in the sanctuary were differently couched between the Greek and the Latin, in accordance with the expectations of the literate members of communities for whom they were the predominant language.<sup>59</sup> Latin was the official language of negotiation and legal exchange between Latins and Greeks at the time, as H. and R. Kahane have pointed out.<sup>60</sup> The sanctuary of the church was therefore an appropriate place for a formal Latin inscription, alongside the Greek. The small Syriac inscription in the nave was to be seen by worshipers and—whether or not it was consistently literally “read”—registered Syriac among the languages of prayer in the church. As the liturgical language of both Orthodox and “Monophysite” Jacobites, it presents an ambiguity which cannot have been fortuitous. A function of this inscription was arguably an acknowledgment of the “Monophysite” communities, whose influence was rising in the 1160s, encouraged by their good relations with the Franks. While the Orthodox and Latin were the predominant communities, the “Monophysites” were also represented at the Church of the Nativity.<sup>61</sup>

I am arguing that the artists who signed their names in mosaic be given credence within their immediate context as representatives of the indigenous communities. The identification of various parts of the mosaic work with particular artists militates against Cutler's concept of a Byzantine “shop” coordinated by a Constantinopolitan, Ephraim. Identifiable craftsmen were simultaneously at work—almost certainly with assistants—on their own sections of an agreed overall scheme negotiated by the Orthodox with the Latin

<sup>54</sup> Hamilton, “Queens of Jerusalem,” 148–49 with previous references and dating arguments.

<sup>55</sup> Buchthal, *Miniature Painting*, 10–11, pl. 19d.

<sup>56</sup> For the female martyrs, on the west wall of the north sanctuary opposite the Virgin Hodegetria, see O. Demus, *The Mosaics of Norman Sicily* (London, 1949), 42–43, pl. 24a; Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 23, pl. 33. On the question of dating, the Cappella Palatina was consecrated by Roger II in 1140 and there is an inscription of 1143 at the base of the cupola. Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 39–41 with note 187, marshals the weight of opinion for the completion of the sanctuary mosaics at the east end of the chapel by 1150. Also arguably datable to the 1140s are the Damascus Gate chapel paintings in Jerusalem: L.-A. Hunt, “Damascus Gate, Jerusalem, and Crusader Wall-painting of the Mid-Twelfth Century,” in Folda, ed., *Crusader Art in the Twelfth Century*, 191–214.

<sup>57</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 58, 140, with pl. xvii, fig. 37, observes that the bishops' miters at Bethlehem are of a western type initiated in the mid-12th century: his comparison is between the miter of Leo in Bethlehem and Catald in the Palatine Chapel in Palermo. Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 39 with note 181, points out that Roger II possessed a relic of St. Catald, the patron saint of Palermo, who made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

<sup>58</sup> Kühnel, *Wall Painting*, 141–43, compares only five column paintings directly with the mosaics.

<sup>59</sup> Cutler, “Ephraim, Mosaicist of Bethlehem,” 182.

<sup>60</sup> H. and R. Kahane, “The Western Impact on Byzantium: The Linguistic Evidence,” *DOP* 39 (1982), 150.

<sup>61</sup> The site of the baptistry of the Armenian community in the 12th century is known, for instance: Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 180; K. Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1976), 42–44, enumerates the rites of the Armenians at the Church of the Nativity.

upper clergy. Even the erection of Manuel's portrait in several parts of the church, including the sanctuary, was tactfully arranged with the Latin bishop of Bethlehem. John Phocas, writing in 1185 from an Orthodox perspective, noted that it was in acknowledgment of Manuel's sponsorship of the mosaics that Raoul "set up the Emperor's portrait in several places, and even in the holy sanctuary above the cave."<sup>62</sup> The mosaic program must have been installed for Manuel by the Orthodox clergy on the spot, negotiating with their Latin superiors.

#### IV. THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY'S MOSAIC PROGRAM AS AN ECUMENICAL STATEMENT

Pointing up the local Orthodox basis of the workmanship at Bethlehem is one side of the coin. Turning to the meaning of the mosaic program, its interpretation as an ecumenical statement commanding the attention and cooperation of Orthodox, Latins, and "Monophysites" identifies its key role in religious and political debate of the 1160s. The program of the main church acted as exegesis, a gloss on the events of the birth of Christ. The Nativity is explicated as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. A teleological perspective anachronistically extended its relevance forward to the Holy Land of the twelfth century. Through the reconciliation in visual form of the two natures of Christ, the way is opened for theological discussion. Read in this light, the "signed" sections of the program—the sanctuary, nave, and transepts—formed a coherent whole. This depended on the configuration of events arising from Emperor Manuel's preoccupations and influence in the Holy Land in the third quarter of the century, and in particular his negotiations on theological and political issues with the Latin king, the Latin Church, and the local communities.

##### *Sanctuary Mosaics*

The Virgin and Child, flanked by David and Abraham, provided the focus of the choir apse.<sup>63</sup> The words "Ave Maria gratia plena . . . Ecce ancilla (Domini fiat mihi) s(e)c(un)d(u)m ver(bum tuum)" (Luke 1:28, 38) filled the interstices. The Annun-

ciation occupied the arch above, inscribed in Latin. To the north, below the Latin part of the main sanctuary inscription, was Pentecost followed by the Dormition of the Virgin.<sup>64</sup> To the south, below the Greek part of the bilingual inscription, the Presentation in the Temple was sited. The sanctuary mosaics, then, invited veneration for the iconic Virgin and Child, at the same time as laying emphasis on the mortality of the Virgin. The apostolic mission of the Church is authorized through Pentecost, placed opposite Christ's own Presentation in the Temple.

Emperor Manuel's portrait in the sanctuary probably occupied the space next to the Presentation, below the Greek inscription. The portrait metaphorically presided over the church councils in the nave, as Manuel himself had chaired the opening session of the synod of 1166 in the hall, or "Triklinos of Manuel" in the Great Palace in Constantinople.<sup>65</sup> This council had debated the Orthodox interpretation of Christ's words, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). It is significant that Manuel, with the advice of a Latin theologian, Hugo Etherianus, then reasserted the interpretation of the passage that accommodated western belief. The resulting edict, carved on slabs of stone, was displayed in the church of St. Sophia.<sup>66</sup> Manuel's portrait in the apse at Bethlehem served, then, to sanction the emperor's rights as both imperial caretaker of one of the holiest shrines in Christendom and as the arbiter of Orthodoxy.

##### *Nave Mosaics*

The main register of the nave arcades displays partially surviving mosaics of ecumenical and provincial church councils, designed to stamp an Orthodox interpretation on the nature of Christ.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Quaresmius, *Historica theologica*, 672: "... primò videntur Christi Apostoli sanctam Deiparam ad tumulum deferentes in feretro sive, . . ." Most commentators have interpreted this as the Burial of the Virgin.

<sup>65</sup>P. Magdalino, "Manuel Komnenos and the Great Palace," *BMGS* 4 (1978), 107 with note 23. Vat. gr. 1176 (fol. 11r) has a portrait of Manuel with the empress Maria of Antioch accompanying the text of the church council of 1166 presided over by Manuel: see P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," *ByzF* 8 (1982), 139–40, with fig. 2.

<sup>66</sup>C. Mango, "The Conciliar Edict of 1166," *DOP* 17 (1963), 315–30, with figs.

<sup>67</sup>For the councils: Quaresmius, *Historica theologica*, 646–71; Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (I), 101–52; idem, "Les représentations des conciles dans l'Église de la Nativité à Bethléem. Deuxième partie: Les inscriptions," *Byzantion* 13 (1938),

<sup>62</sup>D. Baldi, *Enchiridion Locorum Sanctorum* (Jerusalem, 1982), 115; Wilkinson et al., *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, 333.

<sup>63</sup>Sanctuary mosaics: Quaresmius, *Historica theologica*, 672; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 59–60; De Sandoli, *Corpus Crucisignatorum*, 196–98; Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 138–40, with diagrams figs. 2–5, positioning the sanctuary scenes in relation to those of the north and south transepts.

The sequence of these was according to Byzantine tradition, with seven ecumenical councils, convened by earlier emperors, commencing at the east end of the south wall with the Council of Nicaea of 325. The series continued clockwise, with the provincial councils on the north wall progressing from the west, starting with Carthage (254). The councils were aligned directly above the ancestors of Christ. Above them was an inhabited scroll frieze, still partially preserved on the north wall, with the procession of angels and narrower foliage frieze at the top (Fig. 2).<sup>68</sup> Sections of mosaic are preserved from each series.<sup>69</sup>

Each of the councils in mosaic enclosed an inscription stating where it was convened and by whom (in the case of the ecumenical councils), whose heretical views it anathematized, and what its overall findings were. These summaries were in Greek, excepting that of the Second Council of Nicaea (convened in 787), which condemned the Iconoclast emperors, which was in Latin. Enough remains of the ecumenical councils to show that their texts—in silver tesserae—were housed under paired arches, between cross roundels above and gospel books placed on altars below. The councils alternated with aniconic motifs of acanthus stems with vases, and stylized floral and winged motifs. The engraving published by Ciampini in 1693 (Fig. 8) gives an impression of the provincial series as it was in the seventeenth century.<sup>70</sup> With the ex-

ception of the last council, the provincial series employ triple, in place of paired, arches to imply the church sanctuary. Their aniconic panels, too, were more luxuriant than those of the south wall, with candelabra of foliage cornucopia, vases, and flowers added to either side. A still partially preserved jeweled cross flanked by paradisiac trees, symbolizing that erected on Golgotha, acted as the centerpiece (Figs. 8, 9).<sup>71</sup>

Approaching the councils first through their texts reveals anomalies that can only be interpreted as accommodating Syrian Orthodox professions of faith which originated in the writings of John of Damascus. The texts of the fifth and sixth ecumenical councils (Constantinople, 553 and 680) follow Syrian rather than Byzantine tradition in the number of participating bishops.<sup>72</sup> The sixth ecumenical council also follows Syrian, rather than Byzantine, textual tradition in specifying Sergius, patriarch of Constantinople, and Cyrus, patriarch of Alexandria, leaders of the Monothelite heresy, to be anathematized.<sup>73</sup> On the north wall, the text of the provincial Council of Sardica (343–344) (Figs. 8, 9) further demonstrates Syrian Orthodox bias by blatantly—if illegitimately—promoting the Orthodox Church of Antioch. It refers to the reinstatement of Meletius, a defender of Orthodoxy, as Bishop of Antioch when Meletius in fact had nothing to do with the Council of Sardica.<sup>74</sup> H. Stern cited these anomalies to argue the Syrian origin of the synodicon on which the texts were based. While his dating of the north wall mosaics is no longer tenable, his observations on the local origin and resonance of the texts are still highly relevant.<sup>75</sup>

This shows that Manuel did not intervene with

415–59. Stern's observations are still valid, despite his attempt to use them to apply a date of ca. 700 to the provincial council series. The councils' texts are also reproduced in Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 148–54; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 64–66. The Latin text of the second Council of Nicaea is also reproduced in De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 204–5. A further symbol of Orthodoxy, the *Hetoimasia*, is represented at the church, alongside a Deesis group, in the repainted 12th-century paintings of a chapel at the north end of the narthex: Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 74–76, photos 47–48, 50; Folda, "Painting and Sculpture," 256–57, pl. xxxvii–b.

<sup>68</sup> Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," 140–43 for the councils, with reference (141) to birds, animals, masks, and crowns made visible in the scroll frieze during cleaning.

<sup>69</sup> The full sequence comprised, on the south wall: Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), Constantinople (553), Constantinople (680), Nicaea (787). North wall: Carthage (254), Laodicea (364), Gangra (ca. 345), Sardica (343–344), Antioch (272), Ankara (314). Sections preserved today include a part of Nicaea (325), most of Constantinople (381), part of Ephesus, and most of Chalcedon on the south; the major part of the Councils of Sardica and Antioch with the start of Ankara (314) on the north. An impression of these preserved parts prior to Kühnel's cleaning is given in Harvey, *Church of the Nativity*, pls. 10–11 (watercolors); Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, pls. 18–24.

<sup>70</sup> J. Ciampini, *De Sacris Aedificiis a Constantino magno constructis* (Rome, 1693), pl. xxxiii, opposite 150, also reproduced in Harvey, *Church of the Nativity*, 25, fig. 22.

<sup>71</sup> Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (I), 146–49. See also A. Frolov, *Les reliquaires de la Vraie Croix* (Paris, 1965), 133–34, 191–92.

<sup>72</sup> Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (II), 447–49. For the council texts see *ibid.*, 424–45; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 65.

<sup>73</sup> Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (II), 449–50.

<sup>74</sup> Σαρδική. † Ἡ ἁγία Σύνοδος ἡ ἐν Σαρδικῇ τῶν ρμ' ἐπισκόπων γέγονεν διὰ τοὺς ἁγίους Ἀθανάσιον τὸν Ἀλεξανδρί(ας), Μελέτι(ον) τὸν Ἀντιοχείας, Παῦλον Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀποκαταστήναι ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις αὐτ(ῶν) θρόνοις· ἦσαν γὰρ <οὗτοι ὑπὸ τῶν> Ἀριαν(ῶν) ἐ<ξεωθέντες>. Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (II), 450–51. For the text of the Council of Sardica, see *ibid.*, 428–29; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 66.

<sup>75</sup> Stern argued that an early 8th-century mosaic scheme originally comprised six ecumenical and six provincial councils on both sides of the nave. He explained the presence of the seventh ecumenical council (Nicaea, 787) by the remaking of the ecumenical series in the 12th century, a view he justified by the stylistic differences between the mosaics and those of the north wall: "Représentations des conciles," (I), 117–21.



fixed dogmatic Constantinopolitan texts which the mosaicists were obliged to use. Rather, the reverse occurred: Sardica is not the only instance of a bogus provincial council text. Some are fictitious or have been replaced altogether, while others are legalistic rather than strictly dogmatic.<sup>76</sup> Manuel's role is rather that of custodian, patron, and figure-head. Nor did the Latin clergy intervene in the content of the nave mosaics. Despite the Church of the Nativity's being under the jurisdiction of a Latin higher clergy, the text of the Second Council of Constantinople omits the "filioque" in its formulation of the Holy Spirit, a concession to Orthodox belief in an atmosphere of pragmatism unthinkable in the contemporary west.<sup>77</sup> However, rather than assuming that Bishop Ralph turned a blind eye, a more convincing explanation is that the Orthodox clergy-artists were in practice in control of the execution of the program. These anomalies indicate a climate of compromise. An accommodating policy of the Latin clergy toward the Orthodox and an unusually pragmatic approach to dogma are consistent with the political exigencies of negotiation and coexistence in the Latin Kingdom.

This also worked both ways in the political sense. Christ's genealogy was a theme throughout the mosaic program into which Amalric's royal authority was arguably projected. Along the lowest register of the nave arcades were ranged the ancestors of Christ.<sup>78</sup> O. Demus suggested that there were originally forty-two ancestors, on the basis of those at the church, also dedicated to the Virgin, at Monreale.<sup>79</sup> Those on the south wall were according to St. Matthew's account, commencing with Abraham, and were labeled in Latin. Those on the north wall (Fig. 8) followed St. Luke, beginning with Adam, and were inscribed in both Greek and Latin. The last seven ancestors preceding Joseph are preserved on the south wall, ending with Jacob and Mathan (Fig. 10), followed to the east by three words from Matthew 1:16: "Joseph virum Mariae (de qua natus est Jesus, qui vocatur Christus)." The

sequence originally closed with the completion of the text, accompanying the busts of Joseph and the Virgin, representing the earthly family of Christ.<sup>80</sup>

The royalty of Christ's Old Testament ancestors, extending back through the lineage of David, was emphasized in the now lost Tree of Jesse on the west wall. Here the prophets Joel, Amos, Nahum, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Micah and the soothsayer Balaam displayed their prophecies together with that of the Cuman Sybil, taken from the Ritual of the Holy Sepulcher.<sup>81</sup> In heralding the birth of the King of Israel, the prophecies upheld the genealogy of Christ, which began with Abraham and moved through the house of David.<sup>82</sup> The focus on the continuity and sanctity of kingship was important in a further respect: it had anachronistic resonance for the theory of kingship in the twelfth century.<sup>83</sup> The Tree of Jesse performed a justificatory function for the Latin kings of Jerusalem in the twelfth century comparable to that in the glass of St. Denis and Chartres for the French monarchy.<sup>84</sup>

The genealogy served to elucidate the image of the Virgin and Child, accompanied by Abraham and David, in the main apse. These sections of the scheme are united by the visual arrangement, horizontally and vertically, of the nave arcade mosaics. Even today, with the mosaics in their fragmentary

<sup>76</sup>R. W. Hamilton, "Note on a Mosaic Inscription in the Church of the Nativity," *QDAP* 6 (1938), 210–11.

<sup>77</sup>Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 66–67; De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 208–11. Balaam, who prophesied Christ's birth, also appeared in mosaic above the entrance porch at Monreale: Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 57.

<sup>78</sup>Scenes of the Life of David appear as a regal image on one side of the ivory covers of the Melisende Psalter: A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die Byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X.–XIII. Jahrhunderts*, II, *Reliefs* (Berlin, 1979), 79–80, no. 224a–b, pl. LXXIII; Boase, "The Arts in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem," 14 with pl. 3a; Boase, "Mosaic, Painting, and Minor Arts," 138–39.

<sup>79</sup>Even the wearing of alternating green, red, and gold halos by the ancestors of Christ on the south nave wall probably had regal overtones. The colored halos of the ancestors of Christ have been discussed in terms of imperial iconography with respect to the Anastasis mosaic in the katholikon of Nea Moni, Chios: D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics of Nea Moni on Chios* (Athens, 1985), I, 138–39, II, pl. 128. See also A. Kartsonis, *Anastasis: The Making of an Image* (Princeton, 1986), 214–16. Dr. E. James points out to me that generally color is given meaning by context rather than context dictating hue. However, this does not rule out the symbolic use of hue adhering to specific iconography, if consistently present across a sufficient number of instances.

<sup>80</sup>J. R. Johnson, "The Tree of Jesse Window of Chartres: *Laudes Regiae*," *Speculum* 36 (1961), 1–22, acknowledges anachronistic political relevance of Tree of Jesse iconography in the 12th century. See also M. Taylor, "A Historiated Tree of Jesse," *DOP* 34–35 (1980–81), 144–45.

<sup>76</sup>C. Walter, *L'iconographie des conciles dans la tradition byzantine* (Paris, 1970), 156.

<sup>77</sup>Hamilton, *Latin Church*, 164–65, shows this to be indicative of the tolerant policy of the Syrian Latin clergy toward the Orthodox.

<sup>78</sup>For the ancestors of Christ: Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 63, who quotes the accounts of both Niccolò da Poggibonsi (1347) and Quaresmius; De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 205–8.

<sup>79</sup>*Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, 314–35 with note 474, where the Monreale mosaics are dated between the mid-1180s and early 1190s.



state, the spectator's eye is irresistibly swept eastward to the main apse by the row of processing angels on the upper register of the arcade (Figs. 2, 8), with their swirling bands of floral scrolls.

### *Transept Mosaics*

The transepts, arguably undertaken by the third mosaicist, accommodated events from the Life and Passion of Christ. These were inscribed in Latin.<sup>85</sup> It is difficult to reconstruct the original sequence from fragmentary information. However, an obvious starting point was the Nativity and the Adoration and Return of the Magi in the south transept apse, with the prophecy, "Ecce Virgo concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel" (Isa. 7:14). The cycle may then have shifted clockwise to the north transept apse opposite, although less is preserved and recorded from this side. Two scenes are still visible on the east wall, the Incredulity of Thomas and part of the Ascension. The Incredulity (Fig. 11) has suffered repair, at which time most of its inscription (John 20:26–27) was removed.<sup>86</sup> The scene follows Byzantine iconography in the arrangement of Christ with Thomas and the other apostles before the door to the room where Christ appeared. However, it diverges in one important respect, with the gesture of Christ that has importance for the program as a whole. Christ grasps Thomas' arm, drawing his hand forward to touch the wound.<sup>87</sup> It is a graphic statement that makes Thomas the witness of Christ's vulnerability, according to the text. It exposes Christ's humanity in a way that acknowledges the earthly as well as the divine nature.

Moving back to the south transept, and still following Quaresmius' description, we find that the east wall displayed scenes of Christ's divinity, including Christ with the Samaritan Woman and the

Transfiguration, of which only the figure of an apostle remains. The Entry into Jerusalem next to it is largely preserved.<sup>88</sup> Christ's Arrest formerly occupied the wall between the presbytery and the south apse, with the third artist's signature in the wall angle.<sup>89</sup> The upper register of the south transept included the Evangelists. St. John the Evangelist, named, appeared writing the opening words of his gospel. These words were repeated, written on an open scroll. Joachim, father of the Virgin, is specified, and therefore Anna appeared too.<sup>90</sup> This now fragmentary transept scheme referred to Christ's earthly life, parentage, and mortality, with the Evangelists as the writers of the Gospels.

### V. OVERALL PROGRAM: ITS THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Taken as a whole, the mosaic program proclaimed the reconciliation of the divine and human natures of Christ.<sup>91</sup> The Virgin and Child in the apse was the *summa*. The Annunciation above indicated the divine conception with Abraham and David on either side standing as the main representatives of the Old Testament genealogy. This was balanced with the Dormition of the Virgin representing her mortality and hence the human nature of Christ. Christ's Presentation in the Temple was paralleled by Pentecost, initiating the work of the Apostles and the subsequent role of the

<sup>88</sup>The Entry is one of five scenes (with the Incredulity of Thomas, Ascension, Transfiguration, and the Nativity scene in the Grotto) that overlap with the Melisende Psalter; a stylistic relationship between the two has been noted by Carr, "The Mural Paintings of Abu Ghosh," 232–33 note 62.

<sup>89</sup>These christological scenes stressing the divinity of Christ, with Passion scenes, correspond to those on the south transept wall at Monreale: Borsook, *Messages in Mosaic*, 69. Borsook (pp. 71–75) hints at the influence of Holy Land monuments in describing Monreale as "a visionary Jerusalem": Bethlehem may be the missing link.

<sup>90</sup>Joachim and Anna appear three-quarter length in the apses of the prothesis and diaconicon of the Sicilian church of the Martorana, dedicated to the Virgin and datable to the 1140s: E. Kitzinger, *The Mosaics of St. Mary's of the Admiral in Palermo* (Washington, D.C., 1990), figs. 92–93; Demus, *Mosaics of Norman Sicily*, 80–81, 315 with pl. 54a–b, with reference to comparable Byzantine examples at Chios and Kiev. They could have been roundels, however, as in the former narthex scheme of the Church of the Dormition at Nicaea datable 1065–67: Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina* (Turin, 1967), 194, pls. 273–74.

<sup>91</sup>As early as 1914 Vincent and Abel expressed this in a nutshell: "Tandis que, sur leurs banderoles déployées, les prophètes témoignaient de la divinité du Messie et que les longues files de ses ancêtres affirmaient son humanité, l'Eglise, dans ses assises solennelles, proclamait à la fois l'humanité complète et la divinité parfaite de celui qui naquit à Bethléem . . .": Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 154.

<sup>85</sup>Transept mosaics: Quaresmius, *Historica theologica*, 672–73; Vincent and Abel, *Bethléem*, 154–56; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 62–63, 88–92; De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 199–202.

<sup>86</sup>Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 88–89, photo 42; De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 199.

<sup>87</sup>Christ's gesture also appears in the Incredulity among the scenes of the Life of Thomas engraved on a 12th-century brass liturgical bowl found in excavations at Bethlehem in 1869 and now in the Museum of the Flagellation in Jerusalem. Here the Incredulity is combined with Thomas' mission to India: C. Enlart, *Les monuments des croisés dans le royaume de Jérusalem*, I (Paris, 1925), 189–90; Bagatti, *Antichi Edifici Sacri*, 107 with fig. 29; De Sandoli, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum*, 229–33; Boase, "Mosaic, Painting, and Minor Arts," 139. It is not known when the basin was brought to Bethlehem. The current suggestion that it was brought, with other objects, by a bishop in the mid-13th century, undercuts any direct connection with the mosaics.

Church. The portrait of Manuel was there to represent the emperor as custodian, caretaking the rulings of the church councils, as in the nave arcades, and presiding over contemporary debate. Completing the nave scheme, Christ's ancestors and the Tree of Jesse reinforced the doctrine of the Incarnation with a teleological view of human history tracing divine and earthly rulership to its Old Testament past. This was brought up to the time of Christ in the nave, with Christ's grandparents and parents, paired, completing the row of ancestors in the nave. Finally, Joachim and Anna faced each other above the Nativity, at the start of the earthly Life and Passion of Christ, depicted across the transepts.

The Bethlehem mosaic cycle united the divine and human natures of Christ through a retrospective human chain that linked the Virgin to Abraham. But it also played out the criteria of the Greek and Latin apse inscriptions. The display of Manuel's authority accorded with that of the Latin king and bishop of Bethlehem. By presenting Orthodoxy in a form palatable to the groups with whom he was negotiating, Manuel reasserted his rights over and responsibilities to the holy sites. Uppermost in Amalric's mind must have been the public cementing of the Franco-Byzantine alliance, negotiated in 1168, to further a joint military expedition to Egypt. Amalric's marriage to Manuel's great-niece Maria Comnena in 1169 contributed to this. The furthering of his ambitions in Egypt had been the cornerstone of Amalric's foreign policy since the early 1160s, born of a justifiable fear of the uniting of Egypt with Syria to encircle the Latin states.<sup>92</sup> The joint statement at Bethlehem reflected the spirit of Byzantine-Frankish rapprochement.

The theological agenda in visual form coincided with a period of theological debate undertaken among the Orthodox, Latin, and "Monophysite" churches. The Byzantine church councils of 1157 and that of 1166, convened personally by Manuel in the Great Palace at Constantinople, were directly concerned with the nature of the Trinity and specifically the definition of the relationship be-

tween the Father and the Son.<sup>93</sup> In the Holy Land this initiative should be seen as part of the emperor's policy of reconciling church factions, with a more ambitious end in view. The debates were conducted to achieve not just a *modus vivendi* but actual ecumenicalism. Even though the eventual outcome was temporary Latin, not Greek, union with the Armenian and Maronite churches and closer cooperation with the Jacobite Church, it was the process that mattered at the time.

From this theological ferment, as well as out of political expediency, Manuel's discussions with the Armenian Church were initiated in 1165, through the agency of the duke of Cilicia. They resulted in meetings between the Byzantine envoy-theologian Theorianos and the Armenian catholicos, beginning in 1170.<sup>94</sup> The crux of these negotiations was the working out of an acceptable formula of the nature of Christ, as a single person made up of two natures, which at the same time incorporated condemnation of the dyophysites Eutychius and Nestorius. Analysis of this debate shows that difference of opinion turned on terminology alone: the Armenian position was wholly in accord with the tenets of the Council of Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council of 451 (in mosaic at Bethlehem), in all but name.<sup>95</sup> A letter written by Nerses to Emperor Manuel in 1167–68(?) laid down what B. L. Zekian has termed a "Charter" for action toward union, proposing a framework of mutual forbearance, based on prayer and the search after truth as the foundation for negotiation.<sup>96</sup> This was novel in its spirit of ecumenicalism. It also notably articulated a sense of community on religious and ethnic grounds: an item of the "Charter" advocated sensitivity toward the integrity of each community, and the need—in Nerses' case—to consult bishops on major issues. From 1165 Manuel had been impressed by Nerses, his profession of faith, and his willingness to enter into debate.<sup>97</sup> Evidently the

<sup>92</sup>M. W. Baldwin, "The Latin States under Baldwin III and Amalric I, 1143–1174," in M. W. Baldwin, ed., *The First Hundred Years*, K. M. Setton, gen. ed., *A History of the Crusades*, I (Madison, Wisc., 1969), 549–61, esp. 555–58. For an account of this expedition and its failure, see H. J. Magoulias, trans., *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates* (Detroit, 1984), 91–96. I am grateful to Prof. A. A. M. Bryer for commenting on this point.

<sup>93</sup>F. Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène et Manuel I Comnène* (Paris, 1912; repr. New York, n.d.), 639–51; Mango, "The Conciliar Edict of 1166," 320.

<sup>94</sup>Chalandon, *Jean II Comnène*, 655–60; P. Tekeyan, "Controverses christologiques en Arméno-Cilicie dans la seconde moitié du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1165–1198)," *OCA* 124 (1939), 5–129.

<sup>95</sup>B. L. Zekian, "Un dialogue oecuménique au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Les pourparlers entre le Catholicos St. Nerses Šnorhali et le légat impérial Théorianos en vue de l'Union des Eglises arménienne et byzantine," *Actes du XV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines* (Athens, Sept. 1976), IV (Athens, 1980), 420–41, esp. 427–30.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 433–37.

<sup>97</sup>*Ibid.*, 421–22.

mid-1160s were a time of considerable optimism in Constantinople as well as in Hromkla. Theological debate was a topical issue at the time the Bethlehem mosaics were being executed. At its completion in 1169 the mosaic program represented a state of preparedness for the Hromkla conference forthcoming in 1179. It offered a joint Greek-Latin statement with which to initiate negotiations with the Armenian and Syrian Jacobite churches.

The Syrian Jacobites were wooed alongside the Armenians, although the response was cooler. Patriarch Michael the Syrian sent an envoy as an observer to the meeting at Hromkla and subsequently submitted a profession of faith to Manuel.<sup>98</sup> But a year later Michael eluded Manuel's envoy at Kesoun, and the latter returned to Constantinople with only noncommittal promises on the question of unity with the Syrian Jacobite Church.<sup>99</sup>

Despite these efforts, as far as both the Syrian and Armenian churches were respectively concerned, the ultimate effect was ironically a closer relationship with the Latin Church rather than the Greek. The Latins seem to have bided their time: it was, after all, Amalric in the Latin part of the bilingual Bethlehem inscription who was referred to as the "foe of impiety." Even in 1168, the year before the mosaics were completed, it was the deposed Latin bishop Aimery of Limoges in preference to the ruling Greek patriarch of the day, Athanasius III, with whom Michael the Syrian met on his return to Antioch from Jerusalem. Aimery tried to persuade Michael to attend the Lateran Council of 1179: Michael refused, but did send a tract condemning the Albigenian heresy.<sup>100</sup> Alongside other prominent Syrian Jacobite ecclesiastics, Michael was consistent in his active interest in keeping good relations with the Latins.

Debate between the Greek and Armenian churches continued for another decade, culminating in a council of 1179 with Nerses of Lampron, nephew of Šnorhali, as the new protagonist. But despite willingness on the part of the Armenians to forgo usage of their own terminology, in deference to the misgivings of the Greeks, the initiative

eventually foundered.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, the experience of the debate with the Greeks provided the basis for ecumenicalism, even if entente with the Latin Church was the eventual outcome.<sup>102</sup>

#### VI. THE PROVINCIAL CHURCH COUNCILS WITHIN AN INDIGENOUS TRADITION OF MOSAIC WORK

The iconographic representation of the church councils is derived from fifth–sixth century mosaics of councils and palace architecture. The Council of Sardica (Figs. 8, 9), in common with all but the last of the Bethlehem provincial councils, comprises a tripartite structure representing a church sanctuary and encloses an altar on which the Gospels rest. This structure relates to early Christian representations of Orthodoxy, notably the mid-fifth-century mosaics of the dome of the Baptistry of the Orthodox at Ravenna where altars with open codices are flanked by thrones and acanthus candelabra which emanate from the base of the drum.<sup>103</sup> The architectural ornament of the Sardica Council—curtains, pediments, cupolae, spandrel decoration, and finials—is reminiscent both of the fantastical architecture of the mosaics of the cupola of St. George at Salonica of ca. 400 and the sixth-century mosaic of the palace of Theodoric at St. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna.<sup>104</sup>

But the particular style of the provincial councils recalls local mosaic work undertaken for the Umayyad caliphs in Palestine and Syria. The provincial councils, with the north transept scenes including the Incredulity of Thomas (Fig. 11), are characterized by an iridescence achieved with the use of gold and silver cubes with mother-of-pearl among predominantly green and red mosaic. This style and technique is specific to the aniconic mosaics of the mosque of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, erected by Abd al-Malik in 691, and his son al-Walid's Great Mosque in Damascus of 706–714/5. In the twelfth century the Umayyad mosaics remained visible in the Dome of the Rock, incorporated into a new decorative scheme when the

<sup>98</sup> Michael the Syrian, "Version arménienne," RHC, *DocArm*, I (1) (Paris, 1869), 366–69.

<sup>99</sup> What formed the basis of negotiation with the Armenian Church proved unacceptable to the Syrian Jacobite Church. The Syrians denounced the Armenian formula as heretical (Julianist): Tekeyan, "Controverses christologiques," 47–51, 91, 101–5.

<sup>100</sup> Cahen, *Syrie du nord*, 567.

<sup>101</sup> Zekiyan, "Un dialogue oecuménique au XIIe siècle," 430–33.

<sup>102</sup> Zekiyan, *ibid.*, 437, points out that St. Nerses Šnorhali's vision of ecumenicalism actually saw the unity of all churches with Rome as the ultimate goal.

<sup>103</sup> Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (I), 122. The Baptistry of the Orthodox mosaics: V. Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina*, 53–54, pl. 23.

<sup>104</sup> Lazarev, *Storia della pittura bizantina*, 35–36, pls. 3–4 (St. George, Salonica); 77, fig. 53 (St. Apollinare, Ravenna).

monument was converted into a church known as the *Templum Domini*.<sup>105</sup>

The local connections with the Umayyad mosaics of Jerusalem and Damascus are persuasive first in the detail of architectural and symbolic forms. Sardica's portico, surmounted by a cupola flanked by small towers (Figs. 8, 9), is found in the badly damaged mosaics over the arch at the end of the north transept mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus.<sup>106</sup> Porticoed buildings, including exotic palaces with droplets of mother-of-pearl, appear in the landscape of the *Barada* panel, on the wall of the western arcade at Damascus (Fig. 12).<sup>107</sup> The Council of Sardica is positioned between the cross in a paradise of trees and a triad of symbolic motifs. Three candelabra of floral and symbolic motifs are grouped to the right (Fig. 9). Emanating from the stem of the central candelabrum is a pair of wings studded with mother-of-pearl bands. Sassanian royal symbols such as these, in the form of winged motifs crowning vases flowing with stylized volutes of vines, appear repeated around the base of the drum of the Dome of the Rock (Fig. 13).<sup>108</sup>

M. Van Berchem was skeptical about the post-twelfth-century texts claiming the Damascus mosaics as the work of artists sent from Constantinople and attributed them, with the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, to local Syrian Christian mosaicists.<sup>109</sup> Documentary evidence, with surviv-

ing fragments of aniconic mosaic work, points to the practice of such an indigenous Christian tradition of mosaic work in the Holy Land up to the time of the Bethlehem mosaics. A Syrian artist, Thomas "monk-painter of Damascus," undertook mosaic work in the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem in the ninth century, as is known from his signature in a contemporary manuscript.<sup>110</sup> The mosaics of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem represent Umayyad-style tapering trees. Dating to shortly before the mid-eleventh century, they prove continuity through the Fatimid period.<sup>111</sup> In the mid-twelfth century, aniconic mosaics with floral motifs were set up at the Chapel of the Franks as part of the Crusader refurbishment of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, completed in 1149.<sup>112</sup> It is speculative as to how extensive the practice was in the twelfth century, but the special technique of mosaic work at Bethlehem itself in the 1160s could well have extended to the production of mosaic icons.<sup>113</sup>

O. Grabar has argued that the Jerusalem mosaics symbolized the conquest of Islam over non-Muslims.<sup>114</sup> At Bethlehem the balance is restored in favor of Christianity. Here the jeweled and

<sup>105</sup> For the technique of the Dome of the Rock and Damascus mosaics: Van Berchem, "Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock" (above, note 25), 217–32. For the relationship of Bethlehem to these: Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (I), esp. 107–17; idem, "Encore les mosaïques de l'Église de la Nativité à Bethléem," *CahArch* 9 (1957), 144–45. For the Dome of the Rock as the *Templum Domini* of the Franks, see Hamilton, "Rebuilding Sion," 109–10. The new decoration included an additional mosaic frieze on the exterior walls.

<sup>106</sup> Van Berchem suggested that this building depicted a mosque, even the Great Mosque of Damascus itself: M. Van Berchem, "The Mosaics of the Great Mosque at Damascus," in Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture*, 236, with pls. 42a (watercolor before the fire of 1893) and 42b (photograph after the fire), in which the building is to the upper left of the arch; Stern, "Représentations des conciles," (I), 115–16.

<sup>107</sup> Van Berchem, "Mosaics of the Great Mosque at Damascus," 239–43, esp. 241, pl. 44c.

<sup>108</sup> Van Berchem, "Mosaics of the Dome of the Rock," 170–71, 198–200, pl. 32.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 150–67, esp. 163–64. The written sources are still open to interpretation. G. R. D. King, *The Origins and Sources of the Umayyad Mosaics in the Great Mosque of Damascus*, Ph.D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London, 1976), chap. 4, esp. 363–65, considers it unlikely that mosaicists were sent from Constantinople during the early years of al-Walid's reign to work either at the Mosque of the Prophet at Medina or at the Great Mosque of Damascus: not only is the textual evidence inconclusive, but Byzantine-Islamic relations were at too low a point.

<sup>110</sup> A. Frolow, "Le peintre Thomas de Damas et les mosaïques du Saint-Sépulchre," *BEODam* 11 (1945–46), 121–30, gives the text, inscribed in a 9th-century hand, on a folio bound into a Psalter dated 862 (Leningrad, cod. gr. 216).

<sup>111</sup> The Aqsa mosque mosaic, on the arch before the mihrab, is reproduced by R. W. Hamilton, *The Structural History of the Aqsa Mosque* (Jerusalem-London, 1949), pl. 11; for the Aqsa mosque in the Crusader period, see Hamilton, "Rebuilding Sion," 110.

<sup>112</sup> M. Ayalon, "Un mosaïque médiévale au Saint-Sépulchre," *RevBibl* 83.2 (1977), 237–53.

<sup>113</sup> The mosaic icon of Christ Eleimon in Berlin (Früchrichtliche Sammlung, Staatliche Museen, West Berlin) has several features in common with the mosaics of the Church of the Nativity, meriting its attribution to Bethlehem in the 1160s. In particular, it displays the striking use of silver cubes for the cross-nimbus, undergarments of Christ, and the closed folios of the gospel book that Christ holds. Detailed comparison with the mosaic panel of Jacob at Bethlehem (at the east end of the south nave wall, here Fig. 10) extends to the modeling of the head, with a sideways glancing of the eyes, gesture of the hand, as well as the pointed folds of the undergarments, in each case picked out in silver. Even taking into account the fact that the Berlin icon is restored, its mosaic cubes are widely spaced, a feature of the Bethlehem mosaic setting technique mentioned above, note 36. No consensus has been reached about the icon. Recently it has been dated ca. 1100 by V. H. Elbern, *Das Ikonen-kabinett, Bilderhefte der Staatlichen Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (Berlin, 1979), 11, no. 1, with color reproduction and previous bibliography. See also K. Weitzmann et al., *The Icon* (London, 1982), 19, 54 (plate), where it is dated 1100–1150. The figure of Jacob at Bethlehem is reproduced by Hamilton, "Note on a Mosaic Inscription," pl. LXXII (1–2) and Kühnel, "Ausschmückungsprogramm," pl. 12, in color.

<sup>114</sup> O. Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 2nd ed. (New Haven-London, 1987), 55–64.

winged Sassanian motifs represented the temporal authority of Christian kingship. The continuity of local craftsmanship, alongside the political aspirations embodied in the visual and aesthetic appearance of the mosaics, provides an explanation as to why the Umayyad mosaics were an inspiration to the twelfth-century mosaicists of Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

There is, then, every reason to suppose that the mosaic work at Bethlehem belongs within a lively artistic tradition maintained by indigenous artists throughout the period of the Latin Kingdom. The major building and renovation projects of the twelfth century were understandably undertaken with an eye to surpassing the major local Muslim monuments of the past.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Applying a colonial model to the cultural milieu of the Crusader states through an analysis of the mosaics of the Church of the Nativity reveals the extent and relevance of an indigenous contribution. The local dimension is apparent both from the Orthodox affiliation of the artist-ecclesiastics and the visual evidence of the mosaics themselves. The presence of the languages of Greek and Syriac as well as Latin in the signatures of the artists represents the religious and ethnic interests of the communities to which they belonged. This militates against the view that the mosaicists were merely a "workshop" imported from Constantinople for the purpose. Of the three known artists, the monk Ephraim probably belonged to a monastery in Palestine, while Basil was certainly a Syrian deacon. Their work consolidated the refurbishment of the church, under way since the 1130s with the painting of the nave columns with representations of saints, with Orthodox ascetics from Palestine prominently featured. But the defining feature and *raison d'être* of the choice of mosaic as a medium was a conscious sense of continuity with the local past evoked through style and technique. In the nave mosaics of the councils in particular, the aniconic symbolism, expressed through the shimmering of gold, silver, mother-of-pearl, and colored tesserae, reinterpreted an indigenous tradition extending back to the golden age of Umayyad mosaic work in Jerusalem and Damascus.

Emperor Manuel was alive to the richness of these connotations when he intervened in the

1160s. His involvement was welcomed by Amalric, who recognized the need for Franco-Byzantine co-operation to preempt Muslim ambitions in Egypt and to protect the northern frontiers of the Latin states. The assembling of the mosaics assigns them to the crucial time when Manuel spearheaded the initiative to bring the indigenous Christian churches, Orthodox and "Monophysite," into communion with the Byzantine and Latin churches. The desire to promote the interests of the indigenous Orthodox communities was consistent with the ecumenical aspirations of the emperor. Manuel also cast his net farther. With the cooperation of the Latin higher clergy, he was intent on deliberating christological dogma with the "Monophysite" churches. They in turn were eager to explain that "Monophysite" did not imply "heretical" and for political reasons sought closer cooperation with the Crusader states. In the long run, it was the Latins and indigenous Christians, Syrians and Armenians, who benefited from this initiative. The mosaics stand as a testimony to this extraordinary agenda.

By making himself responsible for the refurbishment of Bethlehem, with the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem and Orthodox monasteries in the Holy Land, Manuel's ambition extended well beyond expressing his suzerainty over Amalric to enacting the role of the new Constantine.<sup>115</sup> It was through the indigenous Christian communities, acting as theological, political, and cultural intermediaries, that such a project could be realized. The concerns of the 1160s were interjected into the wider decorative scheme by the evocation of the claims of Christian kingship and the role of Manuel as arbiter of Orthodoxy and protector of the Holy Land shrines. This interpretation of the mosaic program at Bethlehem identifies a third, indigenous, dimension to an understanding of art in the Latin East, challenging the concept of an exclusively bipolar western-Byzantine "Crusader" art.

University of Birmingham

<sup>115</sup>In the edict set up in St. Sophia following the council of 1166, Manuel is referred to as "heir to the crown of Constantine the Great and in his spirit holding sway over all of his [Constantine's] rightful possessions, inasmuch as some have broken away from our Empire": Mango, "The Conciliar Edict of 1166," 330. See also the comments of Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century," 172–73.